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COMMUNICATING YOUR PARTICIPATION AT WORK: AN EXPLORATION OF PARTICIPATION TYPES, COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND SATISFACTION

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by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

Thomas Neil Cooper

for his unwavering support.

COMMUNICATING YOUR PARTICIPATION AT WORK: AN EXPLORATION OF PARTICIPATION TYPES, COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND SATISFACTION

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The purpose of this research was to determine the existence of and then clarify employees' varied responses to participative opportunity. The study explored communicative participation by delineating participation classes[1] and categorizing participation relevant communication behaviors. Specifically, connections between employees' motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy were created to determine unique groupings with differing approaches to participation. Next, categories of participation relevant communication behaviors were determined and then related to the participation classes. Finally, differences

[1]The label "class" can be understood as a synonym for category or cluster. There is no intended meaning related to social class structure.

among the participation classes on satisfaction with participative opportunity and organizational commitment were tested.

These data suggest the presence of five participation classes: sideliner, engager, coaster, potential engager, and avoider which are marked by varying levels of four dimensions of communication behavior: formal, informal, social, and non-participation. The greatest contributor to the model of participation class was employees' sense of opportunity to participate. This was followed by their general self-efficacy, and finally their motivation to participate. Further, results indicate that only coasters, with low levels of commitment and satisfaction, vary significantly from the other classes on these issues of morale. In addition, potential engagers are significantly less satisfied with the opportunity to participate in their organizations.

These findings have implications for participation theory and practice. One key contribution is a model of participation types that can explain why employees respond to participative opportunity in differing ways within the same context. The model also suggests that one reason participation programs achieve differing levels of success is the lack of differential management of employees who possess varied perspectives and abilities in relation to participation. In addition, the findings focus our theoretical understanding of participation by clarifying that the participative act is inherently communicative.

One valuable contribution this study makes for practitioners relates to the importance of participation in organizational change efforts. Classification of employees prior to implementation of an initiative, which is then followed by management of their participation in a manner that complements their class characteristics, may alter the type of involvement employees contribute as well as the organizational climate during and after the change effort. The benefits of differential management can influence individual and organizational outcomes.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

According to the Employee Involvement Association, the oldest documented formal system of employee involvement in the United States is the employee suggestion system established in 1898 by Eastman Kodak (History, www.eianet.org/history.htm). Since that time, interest in inclusionary practices and processes in organizations has grown, particularly in recent decades (Cotton, 1993; Lawler, 1993; Vandenberg, Richardson, & Eastman, 1999). A survey of Fortune 1000 firms indicates that the majority of them currently operate employee involvement programs and that the numbers are increasing (Lawler, Mohraman, & Ledford, 1995). Lawler (1999) indicates that self-managing teams are elements of organizational structure in 78% of U.S. corporations. Participation programs are not only found in corporate settings, but also in education, government, and non-profit organizations. Several examples include Sears, Roebuck and Company, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida, Inc., Lucent Technologies, the Employee Involvement and Recognition Board of the State of Washington, and the Office of Waste Reduction Services of the State of Michigan.

The move toward more participation is driven by a variety of rationales. First, reengineering efforts that stress quantity, lower costs, and staff reduction

have resulted in alternative organizational structures, many of which increase employee involvement (Cheney et al., 1998). Second, the belief that employee involvement positively impacts organizational effectiveness promotes the institution of employee participation programs (Vandenberg et al., 1999). Finally, the desire for a more humane workplace supports involvement practices as opportunities for employees to develop skills, meet individual needs, and practice active citizenry (Cheney, 1995).

Participation in organizations has been conceptualized in multiple ways. Consequently, organizational participation has been studied under a series of labels, including employee involvement (Cotton, 1993; Lawler, 1994; Shadur, Kienzle, & Rodwell, 1999; Tesluk, Vance, & Mathieu, 1999), workplace democracy (Cheney, 1995, 1999; Cheney et al., 1998: Clegg, 1983; Rock, 1991), and empowerment (Bormann, 1988; Chiles & Zorn, 1995; Pacanowsky, 1988; Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1997). In addition, participation in organizations occurs in many forms. Some of the more common structural or programmatic examples include self-directed work teams, total quality management, and continuous improvement programs.

An early review defined participation as group involvement or group decision making, equalization of influence or power sharing, worker ego involvement, and delegation (Locke & Schweiger, 1979). More recently, management scholars have focused on the decision-making aspect and defined

participation as "employee involvement in decision making" that is relatively formal, direct, local, and moderately open regarding decision-making access (Cole, Bacdayan, & White, 1993, p. 68). Based on Cotton's work, Cheney et al. (1998) indicate that employee involvement considers "from the organization's point of view how it is that employees or members might come to be involved in the affairs *of* the organization *for* the organization through means designed *by* the organization" (p. 45). In contrast, workplace democracy refers to "those principles and practices designed to engage and 'represent'…as many relevant individuals and groups as possible in the formulation, execution, and modification of work-related activities (Cheney et al., p. 39). Stohl (1995) emphasizes the communicative nature of participation, suggesting that it is the "discretionary interactions of individuals or groups resulting in cooperative linkage which exceed minimal coordination needs" (p. 5). In this conceptualization, participation is communication that leads to collaboration, moves the group or organization beyond minimal organizing requirements, and cannot be mandated.

What We Know About Participation

General Perspectives

Based on social theory, four general orientations toward employee participation were suggested by Dachler and Wilpert (1978): production and efficiency, democratic, human growth and development, and socialist. The first,

production and efficiency, considers people to be "manipulable [sic] toward maximum output through appropriate social technologies" and is exemplified in research on employee involvement (p. 8). The second, democratic, assumes the "potential capacity of human beings represents a good basis for wise and effective social decision making" and is explored in research on workplace democracy (p. 4). The third, human growth and development, assumes people function with a "basic hierarchy of needs which culminates in a need for self-actualizing or growth" (p. 7). Participation research from this orientation is found in work on issues of empowerment. Finally, the socialist orientation, based on Marx's concerns for preventing alienation in the human experience, gives "work and the production process a central role in explaining human personality and social processes" (p. 6). Conversely, in this research, I seek to explain communicative participation in the work process by addressing individual human attributes and perceptions. Therefore, I will not directly address socialist theories beyond simple explanation. Although there is conceptual overlap in the treatment of these labels for participation in the literature, I will provide a broad distinction between employee involvement, workplace democracy, and empowerment based on Dachler and Wilpert's orientations.

Employee involvement. Cotton (1993) defines employee involvement as "a participative process to use the entire capacity of workers, designed to encourage employee commitment to organizational success" (p. 14). He reviews research on

the following forms of employee involvement: self-directed work teams, gainsharing plans, quality of work life, job enrichment, employee ownership, quality circles, and representative participation. He found that self-directed work teams and gainsharing have the strongest effects on both "productivity and employee attitudes" (p. 232). He concludes with four suggestions of what is needed for successful implementation of involvement programs. First, the involvement should focus on employees' day-to-day work rather than organizational policy. Second, employees need to have decision-making authority rather than just recommendation opportunity. Third, employees can improve their jobs through their own redesign. Finally, involvement programs that have the greatest success make a major change in employees' work lives.

Based on the work of Bowen and Lawler (1992) and Eccles (1993), Shadur, Kienzle, and Rodwell (1999) present three types of involvement. First, suggestion involvement fundamentally involves the communication of ideas through formal programs in which decision-making control remains with management. Second, job involvement emphasizes teamwork in the form of shared roles and responsibilities. Finally, high involvement places decision-making authority in the hands of workers where the decisions are directly related to their work tasks. Rather than use various involvement programs to define type of involvement, Shadur et al. suggest that well-defined categories are more useful when measuring involvement in research.

Workplace democracy. In contrast to participation programs designed strictly to enhance organizational outcomes, Cheney's (1995, 1999) work on democratizing the workplace emphasizes the people as well as the organization. His early definition of workplace democracy emphasizes individual as well as organizational goals and the underlying assumption that these sets of goals can be compatible. Workplace democracy is a

> system of governance which truly values individual goals and feelings (e.g., equitable remuneration, the pursuit of enriching work and the right to express oneself) as well as typically organizational objectives (e.g., effectiveness and efficiency, reflectively conceived), which actively fosters the connection between those two sets of concerns by encouraging individual contributions to important organizational choices, and which allows for the ongoing modification of the organization's activities and policies by the group. (Cheney, 1995, pp. 170 - 171)

Cheney (1995) concludes that democracy is best understood as a "self-critical, self-regenerating and self-correcting process" (p. 183). By contrast, employee participation programs are considered "narrower in scope" and refer to "cases of organizationally sponsored systems that may or may not have democratization as the primary goal or outcome" (Cheney et al., 1998, p.39).

Empowerment. Empowerment is grounded in issues of power in the organization and is conceptualized as both a perception and a process. First, Chiles and Zorn (1995) summarize various approaches and indicate that true empowerment means "employees perceive both a personal sense of competence and the authority or control to act" (p. 2). Albrecht (1988) suggests that perceived empowerment indicates a belief that one possesses influence in the organization toward specific ends. In addition, the process of empowerment has been characterized as an effort by management to "enhance employee commitment and productivity through encouraging participation and involvement in organizational decisions" (Chiles & Zorn, 1995). The deterministic model of empowerment suggests that management can, through a one-way influence process, empower employees (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). However, Chiles and Zorn emphasize the perceptive/interpretive nature of empowerment, indicating that it is not something one party can do to another (see also Bandura, 1977). For example, individual interpretation of the same situation engineered by management might lead one employee to feel empowered, while another would not see the experience as empowering.

Second, empowerment is an interactive process that impacts individual perception of self-efficacy and control (Crabtree, 1998). Bandura (1977) echoes a denial of the deterministic model and highlights the development of personal efficacy. He indicates that these efficacious beliefs

> influence the course of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (Bandura, 1977, p. 3)

This description of varied behavioral outcomes of self-efficacy emphasizes individual choice and experience. In the deterministic model of empowerment, employees may be told they have power to make certain choices or be given a new opportunity for involvement in the organizing process, however, these possibilities may not impact the belief that they are capable of such involvement. If we apply Bandura's concepts directly to participation, we see that self-efficacy is an individual driving force that influences the choice to participate, the amount of effort applied, and its continued application when participation is difficult. In addition, the valence of individuals' self talk, the emotional stress involved in participative acts, and levels of successful engagement are all tied to this variable, which is primarily in the control of employees rather than management.

Chiles and Zorn (1995) combined Bandura's self-efficacy theory with the organizational concept of culture to provide a framework for their study of employees' perceptions of empowerment. They argue that "self-efficacy is a

necessary but not sufficient condition for empowerment in organizations" (p. 4). For example, an employee may feel personally capable of accomplishing some task; yet not perceive the cultural freedom to do so. This framework allowed them to explore perceptions of personal competence and control in the organization as well as the organizational practices that enable or inhibit personal control.

To summarize, participation in organizations occurs in a variety of forms and to differing degrees. These differences can range from employees simply suggesting new ideas that relate to their own work to participation in a system of governance that allows each individual direct influence on organizational policy issues (i.e., one person – one vote). There is some confusion about participation that exists beyond the complexity of the construct. Scholars' use of different labels to refer to the same conceptualization of participation is a result of and fuels this confusion. Therefore, I am differentiating these labels generally by the scope of the involvement.

First, employee involvement encompasses multiple program types that are generally sponsored by the organization. Under this approach, the types of tasks addressed by employees' involvement are limited to their day-to-day work activity rather than organizational policy. In contrast, workplace democracy is a system of governance that gives workers the power to affect important organizational choices influencing activity and policy. Finally, empowerment spans across both conceptualizations by addressing employees' perceptions of

their competence and control to act. These participative acts can occur in the context of an involvement program or a democratically structured organization. In addition, empowerment can be part of informal, non-structured participative interaction. As an enabling process, empowerment can exist in relation to any task.

Research Foci in Existing Literature

Researchers have explored the relationships between involving practices in organizations and a wide range of specific variables. Examples of broad questions explored in the research on participation address outcomes, antecedents, evaluation criteria, and communication. These questions with examples of corresponding research follow.

What organizational outcomes are related to employee participation? Several outcomes that have been related to participation efforts are organizational commitment (Shadur et al., 1999; Steel & Lloyd, 1988), performance (Marshall & Stohl 1993; Miller & Monge 1986; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997; Spreitzer, G. M., & Mishra, A. K., 1999), job satisfaction (Marshall & Stohl, 1993; Miller & Monge 1986; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997; Steel & Lloyd, 1988), and turnover (Vandenberg et al., 1999). First, although causal direction of the relationship could not be determined, Shadur et al. (1999) found that perceptions of involvement were strongly related to employees' organizational commitment. Second, Miller and Monge (1986) found that employee perceptions of

participative climate were better predictors of job satisfaction and performance than actual participation in specific decisions. Next, Marshall and Stohl (1993) found that whether employees perceived participation as simple involvement or actual empowerment had an influence on both job performance and job satisfaction. Finally, Vandenberg et al. (1999) found that more frequent opportunities for training in participation skills resulted in lower levels of turnover. In addition to organizational outcomes, researchers have addressed potential outcomes for the broader society.

Does participation in the workplace influence involvement in community and politics? Initially theorized by Pateman (1970), the question is one of voice. If workers are given voice in important issues in their organizations, are they more likely to use their voice as private citizens? A major assumption in participation theory, that "participatory experience creates a desire for more participation," would indicate that the answer is yes (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992, p. 139). However, this only addresses the idea of motivation; ability is also important. In a meta-analysis that viewed participation as various communication acts designed to expand discussion and influence others, Elden (1981) suggests that participatory skills learned at work may transfer and be used by individuals in the political domain.

What are the antecedents of employee involvement? Certain organizational structures, organizational practices, and/or individual employee

characteristics have been found to be antecedents of employee involvement. First, democratic structures (e.g., a worker co-operative) by design support employee involvement. However, Clay (1994, as cited in Cheney et al., 1998) indicates that these structures can become rigid and outlive their usefulness. Stohl and Cheney (2001) refer to this as the paradox of formalization. Therefore, it is important that the democratic organization be self-reflexive and maintains a discussion of the core values that support its purpose and structure (Cheney, 1999). Second, Vandenberg et al. (1999) present a model that suggests that business practices in relation to work design, incentives, flexibility, training, and direction setting led to high involvement work processes. Further, involvement was related to four conceptually distinct categories of work processes: power, information, reward, and knowledge. Third, in a study of self-managing work teams in two service organizations, Spreitzer, Cohen, and Ledford (1999) found that creating an employee involvement context, work design, and team characteristics were important predictors of the teams' effectiveness; while team leadership was not. In contrast, leadership was one of the antecedents to group level participation found by Hirokawa and Keyton (1995). They also found that member motivation, information resources, and compatibility of work schedules influenced level of participation. Although the findings on leadership appear inconsistent, Spreitzer, et al. emphasized coaching behaviors (i.e., communicative behaviors that encourage self-management) in their measurement of leadership, while Hirokawa

and Keyton focused on leadership tasks that helped organize and facilitate members' work. This included boundary-spanning tasks, in which leaders represented the group to other sectors of the organization and brought information back to the group that enabled progress.

How can degree of participation be evaluated? Recognizing that there are many forms of participation, Strauss (1982) created a typology of participative dimensions to enable classification across a number of continua. The dimensions are (a) organizational level, (b) degree of control, (c) issues, and (d) ownership. Monge and Miller (1988) indicate a fifth dimension, whether the participation is direct or representative, and then integrate these five dimensions into three standards for judging the authenticity of a participative initiative. First, range looks at the scope of issues participatively addressed. Second, actuality explores the real influence of the employees' participative efforts. And finally, level addresses both the level within the organization of the participative activity and level of significance of the issues that employees are empowered to engage.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) present four cognitive dimensions of empowerment that are useful for determining the value of the participation task from the employee's perspective. The dimensions are (a) meaningfulness (the fit with one's value system), (b) competence (the feeling that one is qualified and capable), (c) impact (the perception that the task makes a difference), and (d) choice (the degree to which one feels he/she can self-determine his/her goals and

activities). These dimensions emphasize the merit of the participative form for the individual.

In addition to the evaluation of participative tasks and structures, another approach has been to assess the degree of empowerment based on employee characteristics. Conclusions drawn from both interview and survey data suggest four characteristics that empowered people share (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). These characteristics mirror the four dimensions outlined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990): choice, meaningfulness, competence, and impact. First, empowered people have a sense of self-determination about how they do their work. Second, their work is important to them, creating a sense of meaning. Third, they feel competent about their ability to perform their work. Finally, they have a sense of impact, believing that they are listened to and have influence. This approach to assessment is based on the assumption that empowerment is defined in terms of individual beliefs and personal orientations rather than a set of managerial practices (Quinn & Spreitzer).

How does participation manifest itself in everyday organizational interaction? First, Crabtree (1998) suggests that relational communication impacts perceptions of empowerment "through such behaviors as active listening, constructive feedback, credibility, and immediacy" (p. 194). Second, Chiles and Zorn (1995) found that verbal persuasion was positively correlated with both dimensions of empowerment: competence and authority. The verbal persuasion

dimension included assessment of general communication with the employees' supervisors, specific recognition from the supervisor, accessibility of the supervisor, communication with the supervisor about task, and specific recognition from others (e.g., peers, superiors, and subordinates). In the relationship between macro-level culture and perceptions of empowerment, participants' comments were generally positive (74% of all assertions were positive). However, the two significant categories contained more negative comments per interview than the other categories. This seems to suggest that perceptions of efficacy and control are more affected by unmet expectations regarding certain types of communication, knowledge sharing, and access than the degree to which they are present.

Third, conclusions from a study of women dairy farmers in India suggest that a "dialogic communication process can increase the feelings of empowerment" among this population, and that this type of communication can alter power relationships (Shefner-Rogers, Rao, Rogers, & Wayangankar, 1998, p. 336). The study also suggests that the changes in power relationships that occur when individuals are empowered can benefit the collective.

Fourth, Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1997), in a study of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, highlight the interactional nature of empowerment by exploring how organizational members "worked together to produce solutions to commonly experienced problems" (p. 244). They suggest that "although a shift in locus of

control from management to workers is indicative of empowerment on some level, it can be a somewhat superficial form of empowerment in which workers pressure one another to perform at high levels" (p. 244). Stohl and Cheney (2001) refer to this experience of "less, not more, freedom" as the paradox of control (p. 360). Barker (1993) suggests that high levels of identification, values consensus, and personal connections can lead to a system of concertive control in which employees monitor themselves with greater control than would exist in a bureaucratic system. However, contrary to Barker's (1993) work with self-managed teams, results show that empowerment and concertive control interact positively in the Grameen Bank context. The authors suggest that in this non-profit, values-based setting, members' perceptions may be quite different from those in a for-profit organization.

In summary, research exploring outcomes and antecedents of participation, evaluation criteria for participation, citizenship issues, and communication in participation has explored the process and products of participation in organizations. Findings suggest that participation is a complex process involving organizational structure and processes, communication patterns, communication skill, and the individual motivation of persons at all levels of power in the organization. Therefore, participation as a deep structure in the organization will have greater impact on organizational and individual outcomes than surface level involvement programs (Vandenberg et al., 1999). Specifically,

when participation is highly valued and this is evident in organizational structure, communication climate, human resource development, and power sharing practices; its influence will be stronger than in organizations where participation is compartmentalized into the boundaries created by specific initiatives.

Critique

The current state of theory and practice in the area of participation in organizations is dominated by a limited perspective. Although critical scholars (Deetz, 1992; Fairhurst & Wendt, 1993; Mumby, 1988; Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Wendt, 1994) have begun to address issues of power and quality of work life in relation to participation, the managerial concern for organizational effectiveness is still the primary motivation for research in this arena. The employees' perspective and experience of participation is rarely addressed empirically. Historically, organizational variables (i.e., organizational climate, organizational culture, business practices, formal/informal communication networks, and organizational systems) have been explored in an attempt to increase participation practices. However, it is critical that research move beyond organizational structure and processes and address individual employee initiative. Reaffirming arguments stated by Blauner (1964), Brannen (1983), and Pateman (1970), Coffey and Langford (1998) found that "if the desire for participation on the part of workers does not exist, then regardless of any other factors contributing towards participation, participation will not occur" (p. 550). This suggests the need to

research individual variables that impact participation (e.g., employee motivation, self-efficacy, identification with elements of the organization, and personality characteristics – assertiveness, aggressiveness, and ambition).

Second, communication has been considered the means of many forms of participation (i.e., the interaction process necessary for group decision making/problem solving) but rarely been explored as the substance of participation (i.e., the contribution itself; see Harrison, 1985). From the symbolic interactionist perspective, organizations are created through the interaction of their members. For example, Harrison views participative decision making as a "socially constructed phenomenon created by the mutual understandings of superiors and subordinates" (pp. 101 - 102). This suggests that the act of communicative participation is itself substantive as it influences the subjective construction of the organization. For example, power relationships can be affected by communication. Shefner-Rogers, Rao, Rogers, and Wayangankar (1998) point out that "successful empowerment requires a shift in power relationships"(p. 321). Therefore, communication is integral to participation in that it serves as both medium and means for the exercise, development, maintenance, and enhancement of power (Frost, 1987). Finally, Cheney et al. (1998) highlight the substantive nature of communication in the participation process by indicating that research can specifically inform "what speech practices 'count' as meaningful democratic expression and how they can best be promoted and protected" (p. 69).

Next, communicative forms of participation have been studied in a disjointed manner (e.g., as elements of upward influence, decision making, and support). This variable analytic approach increases specific knowledge; however, it limits an integrated understanding of communication in the participation process. Cheney et al. (1998) characterize participation as a special form of communication. Research that is grounded in the communicative nature of participation can frame new knowledge in the area of employee involvement, such that a broader understanding of the intersection of communication and participation theory is created. For example, issues of organizational control studied from a communication perspective can specify the "precise nature of participatory constraints, possibilities, and activities" (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 77).

Finally, research has failed to clearly identify why participation programs rarely achieve the desired level of success. Vandenberg et al. (1999) suggest that no single participation initiative will alter the frame of reference used by employees as they make choices about participating in their organization. Rather, they point to a set of business practices that can create an involving environment, which includes power, information, rewards, and knowledge that is distributed across all levels of the organization. In contrast, Forrester (2000) focuses on the individual and involvement and points out the simple truth that employees have varied interest in engagement in participation processes. In a reconceptualization of empowerment, Forrester advocates selective empowerment; indicating that

some employees are not ready for greater authority or, for their own reasons, do not want it. Counter to this idea, structured participation programs often create uniform treatment of employees. The potential for selective empowerment suggests a practical need to categorize different participant classes in order to inform the management process. This approach would enable differential treatment of employees based on their present desire to participate. Further, characterizing participant types may validate employees' varied responses to participative opportunity. This plan paves the way for organizational practices that reduce stress caused by a poor fit between employee and role expectations in relation to communicative participation.

In addition to a limited perspective, current research often occurs with little reference to theoretical impetus for the work or theoretical implications of the work. For example, Vandenberg et al. (1999) critique participative decision-making literature for exploring a "wide range of [business] practices without theoretically justifying those selected" (p. 306). In a broader critique of scholarship, Cheney et al. (1998) argue that there has been little "conversation" across bodies of literature that are relevant to issues of participation (p. 40). They present seven areas of pertinent scholarly literature: (a) politics, democracy, and participation; (b) power in organizations; (c) leadership in organizations; (d) organizationally sponsored employee participation programs; (e) organized labor and workplace democracy; (f) "alternative" organizations; and (g) feminism and

feminist organizations. This lack of mental cross-pollination has prevented theory in one area from being enriched by the application of theory from a different area. Although individual pieces of research often fail to address theory directly, several reviews of relevant literatures present theory to explain connections presented in the research (Cheney et al., 1998; Monge & Miller, 1988; Seibold & Shea, 2001). Based on my review of current literature, several examples of exceptions follow. However, this limited usage of theory suggests a weakness in participation research. When present, scholars use theory more to frame our understanding of a specific result than to develop a broader understanding of the concept of participation.

First, theory has been used to explain how organizationally sponsored participation programs serve to meet organizational ends rather than increase employee autonomy and influence. Stohl and Coombs (1988), in a study examining quality circle training manuals, found that messages in the manuals representing a managerial perspective influenced the thought processes of circle members. This finding was explained by the theory of unobtrusive control. Training was used by management to indoctrinate circle members with organizational norms, values, and decisional premises through the process of identification.

Second, although not directly implicated by Chiles and Zorn, systems theory can provide a frame for understanding the integrated nature of

organizational and individual influences on participation. Chiles and Zorn's (1995) finding for macro-level culture's impact on perceptions of empowerment expands current theoretical understanding by combining the individual level variable of self-efficacy with the macro-level variable of culture to explain empowerment in the organization. The inclusion of macro level influences indicates that previous models of empowerment, which only address micro issues, may leave out significant information.

Finally, network theory has been used to account for differences in program effectiveness and to clarify whether differences in individual participation occur within the same context. For example, Seibold and Shea (2001) use network theory effectively to explain why various participation programs differ in effectiveness. They indicate that the differences in types of employee participation programs affect the "communication patterns and relationships in the organization[s]" using them (p. 687). For example, they suggest that communication network theory can help explain the inconsistent results found in research on quality circles as well as the greater effectiveness found for quality of work life and Scanlon programs. Specifically, since quality circles emphasize work on task issues, there is limited need to interact with organizational members outside of the immediate work environment. In addition, this limited scope results in little company wide information being provided to the group members. Seibold and Shea suggest that this could reduce the quality of

decisions, management support for groups' suggestions, and therefore, effectiveness. The final casualty of this limited communication may be low levels of group member empowerment.

However, quality of work life and Scanlon programs differ from quality circles in the scope of the decisions addressed and the range of employees involved in the groups. This greater breadth increases the need for broader organizational information and the ease with which it can be attained. The result is a larger communication network addressing broader communication content, which leads to greater program effectiveness.

Additionally, Marshall and Stohl (1993) argue that a network perspective on participation creates a focus on "communicative activity/patterns (i.e., the emergent patterns of participation)" and allows for exploration of "whether workers in the same system participate to varying degrees" (p. 140). They found that "examining emergent communication activities helped explain further the differences in performance among workers within the same participatory context" (p. 153). Their use of network theory to ground definitions of participation, involvement, and empowerment in relationships led to measures that could differentiate outcomes based on those relationships rather than a static participatory structure. However, their use of theory stops short of explaining why workers in the same context may chose to participate differentially.

Need for Future Research

A great deal of research has been done and will continue on the influence of participation practices on organizational effectiveness. However, theory and understanding is also needed in other areas. Seibold and Shea (2001) critique current scholarship indicating a predominant focus on either participation practice in its various forms or its meaning as a philosophical ideal. They suggest that research should focus on how participation is manifest discursively. They provide a useful level of detail in their agenda for future research, but broadly speaking, they call for scholars to address the "communication determinants, corollaries, and outcomes of organization participation programs" (p. 693). After an extensive review, Cheney et al. (1998) also suggest directions for research. Two key foci are (a) the motivations for employee participation, and (b) issues of employee voice. This study proposes to examine each of these issues by addressing (a) communicative participation, (b) employees' motivation, and (c) voice as influenced by employees' perceptions of opportunity for and constraint upon participation.

Rationale

The overwhelming majority of research on some form of inclusionary practice begins with a statement of the broad presence of participation in today's organizations. The pervasive experience of participation and the related paradoxes

described by Stohl and Cheney (2001) suggest the magnitude of positive and negative outcomes in the workplace. This impact on individuals as well as organizational functioning underscores the imperative of continued research. One of the most compelling reasons for the study of participation is that "popular management press is replete with prescriptive advice in this domain" however, "much of it is lacking (or at least outpacing) empirical underpinnings" (Vance & Tesluk, 1999, p. 269). Therefore, we do not have reliable evidence for much of the advice being given.

A second general rationale is to improve organizational process through effective member participation. Tesluk, Vance, and Mathieu (1999) conclude that "success in today's competitive economic environment increasingly requires systems of work organization that maximize the contributions of those individuals who are on the front-line of production, problem solving, quality improvement, and customer responsiveness" (p. 296). In addition, they give equal importance to employees being "able and willing to contribute creatively and proactively" (p. 296). This perspective suggests the need to explore participation from the employee's perspective. Vandenberg et al. (1999) argue that conceptualizations of participation should include employees' perceptions of the value of involvement to their organizational well-being.

Thus, the third rationale asserts the ethical responsibility scholars have to expand knowledge in ways that can positively influence employees' experience of

participation. First, a key motivation for research in this area is voiced by Cheney (1995), "I wish to promote the ideal of a humane workplace, a workplace not just for work but also for people" (p. 169). Second, based on the pervasiveness of management control in participation programs, Seibold and Shea (2001) argue for a "sustained critique…to insure that participants' dignity, happiness, sense of justice, and equality are maintained" (p. 691). Finally, Stohl and Cheney (2001) expand the scope of the ethical responsibility by indicating their belief that the "strong, diverse, and dynamic linkages comprising participation networks potentially enrich and empower individuals, organizations, and society" (p. 398). Asserting the value of participation to society at multiple levels, they strengthen the moral argument for research that uncovers "ways to work with, through, and beyond" the paradoxes of participation (p. 398).

The rationale for the study of participation by communication scholars is rooted in the discipline itself – past and present. First, Cheney et al. (1998) point out that public discussion and influence are the foundation of communication studies. In addition, they assert that "issues of democracy and participation necessarily involve questions about communication in terms of both structure and process" (p. 37). This suggests a characterization of communicative participation as a contribution to the ongoing organizational discussion that bears influence on organizational policy and practice. Second, the current call for engaged scholarship (Applegate, 2001) in the communication discipline would mandate

research on the growing phenomenon of participative processes in organizations. As Seibold and Shea (2001) point out, one of the gaps in current research is the lack of focus on how participation occurs discursively. Therefore, as organizational communication scholars, we would be remiss if we did not study and develop theory that informs the course of member participation in the process of organizing.

The study presented here is motivated by these rationales and is a response to three limitations in the current state of scholarship about participation. First, much of the work has narrowly focused on participative decision making as the only form of participation (Wagner, 1994). Second, while exploring both the antecedents and outcomes of participation, scholars have primarily emphasized organizational elements. What has been overshadowed (with the exceptions of Chiles & Zorn, 1995, & Vandenberg, et al., 1999) is the employee's point of view regarding organizational participation. Third, there has been limited engagement of theory to explain why employees choose to participate differentially.

This study will address these limitations in three ways. First, I seek to expand our understanding of participation through an investigation of explicitly communicative behaviors that not only influence decision making, but also extend beyond decision making (e.g., making suggestions for change, providing feedback, contributing opinions, and involvement in problem solving). Second, in order to focus on the employee's perspective on participation, I will explore the

relationships between organizational members' motivation to participate, their degree of self-efficacy specific to participative behaviors, and their perception of opportunity for participation. Third, I will apply theories of motivation and empowerment as a frame to help direct my inquiry. The study will examine the relationship between the participant classes and the communicative behaviors of individual employees. Ultimately the emergent participant types will be related to the organizational outcomes of satisfaction and commitment.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it is to develop a typology of participant classes. These classes represent differences in how employees respond to participative opportunities. They are determined by the interaction of employees' motivation, self-efficacy, and sense of opportunity in relation to participation. Second, these participant types will be characterized by the communicative behaviors they exhibit in response to a sense of opportunity for or constraint upon participation. Finally, differences by participant type in members' satisfaction with the involving environment and their degree of commitment to the organization will be explored.

Significance of the Study

This study is designed to expand the existing body of knowledge on participation in organizations by exploring explicitly communicative behaviors and characterizing unique participant classes. Further, this research presents the

significant differences by participant class of organizational members' satisfaction with the involving environment and their levels of organizational commitment. The impact of discovery from this study can influence theory and practice.

First, although this study is not designed to directly develop theory, the findings can move scholarship toward theoretical advances. By applying Chiles and Zorn's (1995) integrated approach to the study of participation, this research will use both individual and organizational variables to suggest why organizational members choose to participate differentially in the same organizational context. In addition, the communication choices of the participant types can inform general theories of participation. Finally, the heuristic value of validating a participant typology can impact future research and theory development.

Second, the knowledge gained from this study can inform managerial practice in organizations with or without structured participation programs. The inclusion of informal participation in this study will allow for application of the results in organizations with limited or no formal opportunities for participation. Specifically, the construal of the participant typology provides three locations for intervention. Organizational policy makers can attempt to influence levels of participation by making changes in business practices and work processes that serve as antecedents to members' motivation to participate, self-efficacy, and sense of participative opportunity. Further, the development of a participant

typology allows for the classification of employees' general stance toward participation, thus, enabling differential management. This approach to management can move participation practice in the direction of the "more human workplace" suggested by Cheney (1995, p. 169).

Chapter 1 has presented a summary and critique of participation research suggesting the rationale for this study. Chapter 2 will consider, in depth, theories of participation and the state of current research. Next, participation will be conceptualized as a communicative activity and research questions will specify the direction for this study. In Chapter 3 the method of exploration will be delineated. Results indicated in Chapter 4 will be examined in light of existing literature to enhance the sense-making process. Finally, the implications for theory and praxis offered in Chapter 5 will suggest directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Gaining a universal understanding of organizational participation is difficult due to its many forms and the varied motivations behind participative programs. This review is designed to increase clarity in our understanding and suggest areas of weakness in the current literature. The argument proceeds as follows. First, I review participation literature, laying out the various approaches to participation. This section includes definitions of participation and a description of common participative programs. Next, I present general theories of participation and research into the participative process. Third, I critique the current state of scholarship in this area. The conclusion of this review will be a theoretical reformulation developed to support the proposed research effort. This conceptualization suggests three key elements of a participant typology – motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy. Finally, I present research questions based on this review. By introducing satisfaction and commitment into the discussion, these questions address organizational outcomes as well as participation theory.

What is Participation?

Participation allows employees to "have voice," or express opinions that have the potential to make a difference (Cheney et al., 1998). Participation can vary by the breadth of issues addressed and the depth of employee control in the decision-making process (Rock, 1991). It is effected through alterations in power relationships (Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998). These changes can be initiated through modifications to an organization's structure, its processes, or individual employee initiative. Although participation requires the sharing of power, it does not necessitate a striving for equal power. Therefore, the distribution of power will vary across differing forms of organizational participation. This section begins by conceptualizing the overarching participative element of voice, then a range of definitions of participation are presented, and finally, two typologies that frame varied approaches to participation are used to ground a general understanding of the overall concept.

Voice

The provision for voice is one of the sources of power in a social organization (Forrester, 2000). Hirschman (1970) introduced the concept of voice as "any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs" (p. 30). When his model is applied within the organization, voice is one of two options that dissatisfied employees can choose. The other option is exit, and the model suggests that employees' levels of loyalty moderate that choice. In

addition, voice has been studied in relation to dispute resolution (McCabe, 1997). These characterizations of voice emphasize dissent. Alternately, voice has been used to represent the open expression of ideas or innovative talk in the organization (Haskins, 1996; Janssen, de Vries, & Cozijnsen, 1998).

The voicing of novel ideas for solving work-related problems can be captured as extrarole behavior, often labeled organizational citizenship behavior (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). In Van Dyne et al.'s, (1994) reconceptualization of organizational citizenship behavior in terms of political philosophy, one of the three categories of civic responsibility is participation. Participation "entails active and responsible involvement in community self-governance in whatever ways are possible under the law" (p. 767). That community may be an organization providing its members some degree of self-governance.

Connecting voice and participative initiatives, Cheney et al. (1998) indicate that "democracy extends simple participation in the workplace by ensuring that the individual has a voice, may express an opinion that means something, and has the potential for 'making a difference' in the larger organizational context" (p. 65). In an attempt to categorize the range of possible expression, Gordon (1988) suggests communication (i.e., voicing) behaviors that correspond with employee stances ranging from "active constructive" to "passive destructive."

Definitions of Participation

The plethora of definitions for participation activity in organizations range from simply having a share in the organization (Kaler, 1999), to involvement in decision making (Cole et al., 1993), to a democratic structure that facilitates the valuing of individual and organizational goals (Cheney, 1995; see Appendix A - Table 1). Central to the thesis of this research, other definitions emphasize the interactional nature of participation by focusing on communication that creates cooperative linkages and manifests influence (Albrecht, 1988; Stohl, 1995). Marshall and Stohl (1993) suggest that it is this diversity that makes it difficult to summarize clearly the empirical findings in this area.

Approaches to Participation

One way to consider the variance in participative forms is by looking at the assumptions that underlie them. Lawler (1986) suggests three sets of assumptions that form the basis of participative approaches. First, from the Human Relation's perspective, people should be treated fairly and with respect. Also, this perspective posits that people want to participate, and when they do, they are more accepting of change. In addition, people who participate are more satisfied and committed to the organization. Participative forms from this perspective include attitude-survey programs, quality-circle programs, and other suggestion programs. Second, a Human Resources approach views people as valuable resources because they have ideas and knowledge. Also, when people

have input in decisions, better solutions are developed. Further, to capitalize on employees as resources, this perspective would suggest that organizations make long-term commitments to develop their people. Examples of involvement programs from this approach include gainsharing and some forms of job redesign. However, the scope of decisions addressed by lower-level employees is limited. Finally, the High Involvement approach assumes that people can be trusted to make important decisions relative to their work activities and that they are capable of developing the knowledge necessary for participation in these decisions. In addition, employees making decisions about their own work results in greater organizational effectiveness. From this perspective, organizations follow a more egalitarian design. Often the organization has a team-based structure with limited hierarchy and emphasizes training that addresses skills necessary for effective participation.

In another typology, Dachler and Wilpert (1978), as presented earlier, suggest four general orientations toward employee participation: production and efficiency, democratic, human growth and development, and socialist. The first is exemplified in research on employee involvement, the second by exploration of workplace democracy, and the third by work in the area of empowerment. The socialist orientation will not be directly addressed in the presentation of research as its emphasis on work's alienating impact on society is outside the scope of this argument. Although there is conceptual overlap in the treatment of these labels for

participation in the literature, I will provide a broad distinction between participation as employee involvement, democracy, and empowerment based on Dachler and Wilpert's orientations.

Descriptions of Participative Programs and Designs

Participative programs and designs can be more clearly understood when distinguished by category. One way to classify forms of organizational participation includes employee involvement programs, organizations or units designed to follow democratic principles, and empowerment initiatives both formal and informal. This section will describe each area by presenting definitions and typologies found in the literature.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement programs are based in the productivity and efficiency theoretical orientation toward participation (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978). From this perspective participatory arrangements are limited in scope and intensity. For example, there is a specific focus on task accomplishment. In addition, management typically maintains complete control.

Key definitional issues. Cotton (1993) defines employee involvement as "a participative process to use the entire capacity of workers, designed to encourage employee commitment to organizational success" (p. 14). Walker (1993) highlights the emphasis on organizational goals by making a distinction between

the Swedish model of industrial democracy and the Japanese model of involvement. She indicates that the democratic model allows workers to participate in decision making on issues traditionally addressed by the employer, while the involvement model seeks worker support for management's plans related to production. Based on Cotton's work, Cheney et al. (1998) further clarify management's control by indicating that employee involvement considers "from the organization's point of view how it is that employees or members might come to be involved in the affairs *of* the organization *for* the organization through means designed *by* the organization" (p. 45).

Typology of involvement programs. Commonly, the following are included as employee involvement programs: self-directed work teams, quality circles, gainsharing plans, employee ownership, job enrichment, and quality of work life (Cheney et al., 1998; Cotton, 1993; & Lawler, 1986). A brief definition of each program will provide further insight into the phenomenon of employee involvement. Self-directed work teams are small groups responsible for a specific task that have decision-making authority over how to best accomplish that task. Based on Dachler and Wilpert's framework, Cotton (1993) characterizes them as a "formal system of employee involvement, [with] direct employee participation, and a high degree of control" (p. 174).

Quality circles are small groups that meet voluntarily on company time to discuss issues of quality and generate suggestions for improvement. The scope of

issues is generally limited to their own work processes and decision-making authority is left in the hands of management. In addition, participating employees often receive statistical training to enhance their ability to analyze the issues. Generally, quality programs do not emphasize employee rewards.

However, gainsharing plans, by design, reward employees for their involvement in productivity gains. The Scanlon plan, one of the most common of such programs, is a consultative form of participation in which employees suggest ideas for management's approval. Where those ideas are implemented and positively impact employee productivity or reduce production costs, employees are rewarded with financial bonuses.

Employee ownership is most frequently found in the form of a stock ownership plan. Employees are given stock contributions at designated times throughout their tenure as long as the company remains profitable. This incentive increases participation by affording voting rights as a stockholder. Additionally, reminders of the benefits of ownership may increase motivation toward daily participation in meeting organizational goals.

Job enrichment involves job redesign. By increasing the meaningfulness of the work, employees are believed to experience greater motivation and job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Originally, enrichment occurred by making employees responsible for a whole piece of work rather than a single element on an assembly line (Lawler, 1986). However, multiple methods are used

in job enrichment programs to increase employee participation and involvement by increasing workers' autonomy and their levels of responsibility (Cotton, 1993).

Quality of work life (QWL) programs are specific to union situations. They are designed to enhance the labor/management relationship by involving workers in organizational life through increased cooperation. This cooperation increases workers knowledge by granting access to management discussions on certain company issues. In addition, one QWL program increases knowledge by providing workers paid leave for education that is relevant to the industry or their specific jobs (Cheney et al., 1998).

Workplace Democracy

Workplace democracy is based in the democratic (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978) theoretical orientation toward participation. Traditional democratic theory argues that the democratic process utilizes the collective wisdom of its members to improve the social situation. The practice of democracy also increases knowledge and develops participatory skills, thus sustaining a cycle that improves the quality of decision making by the collective. From this orientation, participatory arrangements are broad in scope and intensity. For example, employees address issues of organizational policy and practice beyond their immediate jobs. In order to add to our understanding of participation as presented under employee involvement, I will address workplace democracy as a form of governance.

Key definitional issues. Workplace democracy can manifest through direct participation by each employee in the organization's governance or through representative participation. Direct participation is most clearly seen in a decision-making structure that allows each worker one vote on all issues brought before the employees. An alternative conceptualization of workplace democracy refers to "principles and practices designed to engage and 'represent'…as many relevant individuals and groups as possible in the formulation, execution, and modification of work-related activities (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 39). This definition is based on Cheney's (1995) earlier conceptualization of a

> system of governance which truly values individual goals and feelings (e.g., equitable remuneration, the pursuit of enriching work and the right to express oneself) as well as typically organizational objectives (e.g., effectiveness and efficiency, reflectively conceived), which actively fosters the connection between those two sets of concerns by encouraging individual contributions to important organizational choices, and which allows for the ongoing modification of the organization's activities and policies by the group. (Cheney, 1995, pp. 170 - 171)

Cheney's rich definition presents democracy in the workplace as an adaptive process guided by democratic principles designed to unify employees and management in the process of work. Although it can include varying degrees of

participative opportunity, it still stands in stark contrast to employee participation programs, which are considered "narrower in scope" and refer to "cases of organizationally sponsored systems that may or may not have democratization as the primary goal or outcome" (Cheney et al., p.39).

A less fluid representative model, European industrial democracy, is legally mandated in some countries and referred to as the co-determination model (Cheney, 1995, p. 170). Using the taxonomy presented by Monge and Miller (1988), the European industrial model of participation generally operates at all levels of the organization. Members have a high degree of control and address a wide range of issues. However, rather than participate directly, employees "elect, or nominate, or are represented by a small group of employees who actually participate" (Cotton, 1993, p. 115). In some cases employees also have ownership.

Typologies. Several typologies have been put forward that are useful in understanding what is unique about a democratic organization and how to evaluate its authenticity. Wisman (1991) applies three principles of political democracy to help characterize the "fully democratic firm" (p. 50). First, the autonomy principle suggests that sovereignty resides in the workforce. Second, the egalitarian principle requires decision making to be based on a one worker/one-vote principle of governance. Finally, the inclusiveness principle means that no permanent group of second-class workers exists. Specifically, all

individuals who remain working with the firm after some trial period will have the right to become full voting members with all the associated rights of membership.

Specific principles of democracy in the workplace outlined by Cheney (1995) are based on values that warrant alternative forms of organizing. For example, worker owned and managed cooperatives diverge from the traditional corporate path by defying the "dominant logic of contemporary organizational life, [which] is oriented toward production, profit, growth, customer responsiveness, and technical control" (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 52). The first principle of democracy requires democratic organizations to buffer themselves from external pressures to change core values and democratic practices. Second, the level and type of interaction necessary for direct democratic participation limit the number of people to that of a small group. Therefore, as organizations grow, they must subdivide into multiple small groups that can maintain "dynamic, self-reflective" communication (p. 195). Next, the principle of self-reflection suggests the need for a continuing conversation on the values held by the collective. Remaining cognizant of these values can help prevent "goal displacement" (p. 178). One final principle addresses the need for consistency between goals and process. Cheney (1995) concludes that democracy is best understood as a "self-critical, self-regenerating and self-correcting process" (p. 183).

Cheney (1995) uses the three factors outlined by Monge and Miller (1988) as standards for judging the authenticity of a participative initiative. First, range looks at the scope of issues participatively addressed. Second, actuality explores the real influence of the employees' participative efforts. Finally, level addresses both the level within the organization of the participative activity and level of significance of the issues those employees are empowered to engage.

Empowerment

Empowerment is based in the human growth and development theoretical orientation toward participation (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978). From this perspective participatory arrangements are one way to "facilitate the psychological development and growth of individuals and groups" (p. 8). In addition, empowerment serves the goals of the organization as well as individual employees. These outcomes are accomplished through power sharing that allows for greater employee involvement, often through increased opportunity for employee voice. Uniquely, empowerment can occur in formal employee involvement programs, informal supervisor/subordinate interaction, or in democratically structured organizations.

Key definitional issues. Empowerment is an interactive process that impacts individual perception of self-efficacy and control (Crabtree, 1998). As such, empowerment is conceptualized as both a perception and a process. First, perceptions of empowerment indicate a belief that one has influence in the

organization toward specific ends (Albrecht, 1988). This belief that one has influence can be based upon perceptions of one's competence or authority to act (Chiles & Zorn, 1995). Second, the process of empowerment generates the perception of empowerment. One characterization of this process is an effort by management to "enhance employee commitment and productivity through encouraging participation and involvement in organizational decisions" (Chiles & Zorn, 1995). However, outcomes of empowerment efforts may vary due to the characteristics of the communication process used and their interaction with individual employee characteristics. An alternate characterization of the process places agency more with the individual rather than the organization. Marshall and Stohl (1993) define empowerment as "the process of developing key relationships in the organization in order to gain greater control over one's own organizational life" (p. 141).

Typology. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) present four cognitive dimensions of empowerment that can be utilized to evaluate the empowering nature of a participative effort from the employees' perspective. Each dimension can be related to one of the following two employee characteristics: values or self-efficacy. First, the dimensions of meaningfulness (the fit with one's value system) and impact (the perception that the task makes a difference) relate to employees' values. Second, the dimensions of competence (the feeling that one is

qualified and capable) and choice (the degree to which one feels he/she can self-determine his/her goals and activities) are elements of employees' self-efficacy.

Theories of Participation

Issues of participation do have some foundation in theoretical domains. First, social theories help explain the presence of different general orientations to workplace participation. Second, management theories and theories of organizing illuminate elements of the process of participation.

Social Theories

Dachler and Wilpert (1978) present four social theories as cornerstones for the major orientations toward participation in organizations: democratic, socialist, human growth and development, and productivity and efficiency. Both democratic and socialist theories present participation as a "general social phenomenon, affected by and affecting the general society, its institutions or organizations, and its individuals" (Dachler & Wilpert, p. 4). In contrast, human growth and development as well as productivity and efficiency theories "focus on individual and intraorganizational issues" while characterizing participation as an initiative designed by management to overcome some organizational problem (p. 4). Each theory is addressed in terms of assumptions about human nature, participative context, characteristics of the participative design, and social outcomes.

Democratic. Democratic theory attempts to account for the influence of individual participation on societal and institutional stability. Traditional democratic theory indicates human beings have great capacity for wise and intelligent decision making. This perspective is based on the belief the people are by nature generally rational, responsible, cooperative, and informed due to their interest in self-determination. In contrast, other theorists and researchers suggest that people are apathetic, irrational, and easily swayed by social influences (e.g., other group members and mass communication). Therefore, broad, direct participation may reduce stability and efficiency. These differences are evident in divergent views of organizational participation and the resulting programmatic designs. Traditional theory suggests direct participation by all members, while a more limited model would include representative forms of participation under the control of an elite group. However, both democratic models indicate that participation either through the wisdom of collective input or the satisfying influence of "having voice" leads to stability.

Another dichotomy in democratic theory creates opposing camps regarding the construction of a democratic system in the workplace. From one perspective, an adversarial model of democracy allows for the only valid presentation of opposing views (Alinsky, 1971). This model is most clearly seen in democratic initiatives involving organized labor. However, Mansbridge (1983) argues that only a consensus-based model creates a truly democratic order. At the

heart of the controversy is “how best to represent the interests of a group or groups” (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 69). The key concerns are issues of “organizational size, group homogeneity, and value homophily” as well as “the very definition of democracy itself” (Cheney et al., p. 69).

One postulate of Pateman’s (1970) participatory theory of democracy suggests a connection between participation in the workplace and in the society at large. Generally, the theory views the organization as a political system that supports direct participation of all members through the primary avenue of decision making. The specific claim that democratic principles in practice perpetuate a democratic society is based on the belief that the process not only educates the participants but also increases individual interest in governance. Participation in a democracy is thought to increase workers’ capacity to effectively participate in the future through greater knowledge and a keener ability to formulate and express opinions. This growth is theorized to transfer between the organizational sphere and community or political realms thus strengthening society as a whole.

Socialist. Socialistic theorists, grounded in Marxist philosophy, attempt to account for the debilitating effects that social and economic order can have on the human experience. The basic argument suggests that a capitalistic system leads to alienation of its workers based on divisions between management and labor, division of labor due to the need for specialization, and the workers’ feelings of

powerlessness and apathy. However, people are believed to have the capacity to become economically liberated. Participation is seen as an enabling process that not only increases control, but also educates the workers toward competency in tasks previously accomplished only by management. The desired societal outcome is a proletarian culture evidenced by egalitarian organizational structures and social systems. This culture would support human development and view work as more than an exchange of labor for the wages necessary for survival.

Human growth and development. Human growth and development theories mirror a concern for the debilitating effect organizations can have on their members; however, they emphasize individual rather than societal impact. These theorists seek to move beyond explanation of these effects and suggest participation initiatives as one of several means to overcome them (e.g., Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1960). Believing humans to have a hierarchy of needs moving from physiological survival to self-actualization (see Maslow, 1954), these theorists view people as independent, capable of self-control, and seeking equality. However, they suggest the work context limits personal development through division of labor, repetitive tasks, a unified chain of command, and extrinsically based reward structures. To remedy this, they argue that the organizational design must emphasize intrinsic motivational factors by "allowing greater employee influence, autonomy, and responsibility" (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978, p. 7). These theories support participation as a key mechanism of intrinsic

motivation. In general, shared decision-making programs from this perspective focus on the work task itself. In addition to decision-making initiatives, participation can take the form of joint ownership and information sharing (i.e., the exchange of ideas, feelings, and knowledge across organizational levels). Human growth and development theories work within the existing social structure to make changes at the institutional level that positively impact individual self-realization. Although not focused on societal outcomes, theorists suggest that these changes will reduce mental health concerns in the society at large.

Productivity and efficiency. The productivity and efficiency orientation toward participation brings together individual ideas from various theories. In sum, these concepts view people instrumentally and consider them "manipulable toward maximum output through appropriate social technologies" (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978, p. 8). These theories seek to resolve managerial concerns of production (e.g., poor quality, reduced efficiency, absenteeism, high turnover, and labor disputes). They have embraced participation as a means to increased worker satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. The practice of participation from this perspective leaves control in management's hands and limits the scope to issues of task accomplishment. These theories do not emphasize societal outcomes. However, it can be logically extrapolated that an increase in industrial productivity would support economic stability in the general society.

Theories of Process

Models of participation (e.g., Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Vandenberg et al., 1999) offer building blocks for theory; however, fully developed theories of process are limited. In this section, theories connecting participation and organizational design, control, and organizational effectiveness are presented. In addition, one process model of informal participation is introduced.

Structural design. Traditional theories of organizational design have been eclipsed in the process of increasing workplace participation. Seibold and Shea (2001) indicate that "control by managers, pyramidal designs, stovepipe operational functions, vertical chain-of-command relationships, and rigid bureaucratic procedures have given way, increasingly, to workers' participation in managing, lattice organizations, cross-functional work arrangements, lateral collaborative relationships, and semiautonomous work teams" (p. 664; see Fisher, 1993; Greenbaum & Query, 1999).

Fayol's (1949) theory of classical management and Weber's (1947) bureaucratic theory both contain principles of hierarchy, centralization, and division of labor. An organization with a strict hierarchical structure assigns authority in proportion to one's position within the hierarchy, with higher levels of management retaining the greatest power. Similarly, the principle of centralization places control over decision making in the hands of upper management. Division of labor further limits employee control by assigning

workers to a small scope of specialized tasks. In addition, communication flow is limited to a path running up or down the hierarchy. Each of these principles operates in direct opposition to the organizational environment necessary for effective participation. Thus, new theories of organizing that support flattened hierarchies have emerged.

By contrast, Adler (1999), in a conceptual piece, presents the intriguing idea that bureaucracies can support participation. This is accomplished by altering the social structure of the organization from coercive to enabling. A picture of this type organization can be drawn from Adler's descriptions of the organizational design process. First, to encourage employee buy-in, the enabling design involves employees in organizational systems. Second, it involves them in the design of those systems to ensure that the systems best support the real work tasks. Finally, the system design should encourage members at every level to make suggestions for improvement. Here the principles of hierarchy and division of labor may still be in place, but centralization has been limited to certain issues opening the door for some degree of participation. By changing the organizational climate, members feel more encouragement to participate.

Control. Issues of control have been theorized to influence the scope of participative efforts, the appropriate initiative based on type of work, and the willingness of middle management to implement empowerment programs. First, to account for participation efforts that seem to codify the positions held by

management rather than introduce new perspectives, researchers have applied the theory of unobtrusive control (see Stohl & Coombs, 1988). This control theory suggests that participation efforts that include some form of training can indoctrinate the participants with managerial perspectives on the issues to be addressed, thus creating decisional premises employed by participants in the involvement initiative. Use of these decisional premises is based on high levels of identification engendered through the presentation of organizational norms and values such that they mirror the values of the participants. Interestingly, many of these initiatives are team base and it is the group members that enforce the control not management (Barker, 1993; Stohl & Cheney, 2001).

Generally, theories of control would suggest that lower levels of control give opportunity for greater creativity and innovation. This has been applied to participation to explain two issues: (a) the relationship between program type and organization type and (b) managerial behaviors appropriate to the successful implementation of certain participative initiatives. For example, Lawler (1994) makes a distinction between Total Quality Management (TQM) and employee involvement based on degree of management control. Indicating that there is overlap, he suggests that TQM emphasizes quality improvement often garnered through changes in process, the codification of work processes, and employee rewards that involve recognition. However, these processes occur under management's full control. On the other hand, employee involvement is more

expansive and empowering with an emphasis on organizational effectiveness resulting from alterations in the organization's design. Employees are given discretion rather than a handbook of codified processes. Rewards are more financial in nature and the organizational structure allows for self-management.

Lawler (1994) proposed that these differences have implications for management's choice of participation program and leadership behavior in the organization. First, the type of work the organization does should inform the choice of a TQM program or an employee involvement effort. Generally, TQM has been shown to be effective in high-volume production situations that can benefit from continuous improvement; while employee involvement is more valuable in small organizational units that face a rapidly changing environment requiring creativity and innovation. The second implication suggests the type of leadership necessary to make each type of program successful. TQM managers are most successful when exhibiting typical management behaviors by monitoring employee performance, making work process improvements, and processing suggestions. Alternately, managers in organizations with employee involvement programs in place should facilitate the work of others by empowering employees at lower levels of the organization and by providing vision for that work.

A final control issue addressed through theory is that of power sharing by middle managers. Based on social learning theory (SLT), Forrester (2000) explains why upper management's directives to middle management to empower

their subordinates (i.e., relinquish some control) is often met with resistance. SLT proposes that the motivation to behave in a certain way (BP) is a function of the value (V) the person places on a given outcome and the expectancy (E) that the behavior will produce that outcome: BP = V x E. This suggests two areas of influence: expectancy and value. First, what outcomes do managers value? As managers are typically judged and rewarded on the performance of their units, they value high levels of performance. Second, do managers expect that controlling or empowering behavior will lead to better performance? To the extent that managers believe that empowering others leads to mistakes and lower levels of performance, they will not be motivated to empower employees because they do not value that outcome. This combination of expectancy and value suggests why some empowerment initiatives may be limited by middle management's behaviors.

Effectiveness. Effectiveness has been explained by general models of participation as well as through network theories of organizing. Monge and Miller (1988) present three models of the participation process, each grounded in a different theoretical domain. They are designed to explain how the process of participation is connected to outcomes of productivity and worker satisfaction. Both outcomes are considered standards of effectiveness, productivity from the productivity and efficiency orientation and worker satisfaction from the human

growth and development orientation. All three models limit participation to involvement in decision-making processes.

First, cognitive models of participation suggest that the process of participation increases information flow, which positively impacts productivity and ultimately job satisfaction. Cognitive models represent a human resources approach to participation in which productivity is the ultimate goal and satisfaction is a "by-product" (Lawler, 1986; Ritchie & Miles, 1970, p. 348). Cognitive theories would suggest that knowledge is a primary enabler of effective mental processing. In this model knowledge is transferred between workers and management. Specifically, workers are believed to know more about their jobs than management. This information flows upward from the workers to management when they are involved in decision-making processes regarding their work tasks. In addition, management releases information to the workers to facilitate effective decision making thus creating a downward communication flow. Organizational communication theory suggests that as communication flows in multiple directions, understanding increases through the development of a shared knowledge-base.

In their review, Monge and Miller, (1988) present three cognitive effects of participation that flow from this exchange of knowledge. First, greater use of information held by organizational members at lower hierarchical levels (i.e., upward dissemination of information). Second, employees gain greater

understanding of the situation prompting the decision-making effort, enabling them to better implement the decision reached (i.e., downward dissemination of information). In addition, more knowledge is gained regarding the organization overall and the part an individual employee plays in its process. Third, based on expectancy theory, some researchers suggest that participants gain a clearer understanding of reward contingencies in the organization.

Second, affective models of participation are based in human relations theories of organizing (see Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1960). These theories suggest that opportunity to participate enhances employees' perceptions of their value to the organization. By satisfying higher order ego needs, participation increases job satisfaction, which stimulates motivation and results in greater productivity. When highly involving work processes are in place, employees at all levels of the organization begin to satisfy needs for "challenge, independence, responsibility, support and recognition" (Vandenberg et al., 1999, p. 304). Although productivity is an important outcome for organizational effectiveness, these theories emphasize satisfaction as the target outcome. Increases in productivity are proposed to be a natural result of enhanced satisfaction due to the mediating effects of motivational processes. A key distinction of these theories is that satisfaction is believed to be more a result of the perception of power and the act of participating than of actual influence.

Third, contingency models of participation suggest that a variety of variables influence participant responses and program outcomes. These theories provide some explanation for differences in effectiveness by suggesting the elements that may influence the degree of success for participation initiatives. Vroom's body of work on contingency theories has proposed personality (1960), the decision situation and its rules (Vroom & Yetton, 1973), and job level's direct relation to problem type (Vroom & Deci, 1960). It has also been theorized that values influence participation, suggesting that only certain types of organizations may derive benefit from participation initiatives. The key contribution of contingency models is the introduction of various factors influencing the participation process that can suggest management approaches to different participative situations.

In addition, network theory has been used to account for differences in program effectiveness. Seibold and Shea (2001) indicate that the differences in types of employee participation programs affect the "communication patterns and relationships in the organization[s]" using them (p. 687). For example, quality circles and quality of work life programs are known to achieve different levels of success. Network theory helps clarify how differences in the interaction patterns necessary for the two types of programs are instrumental in creating different effectiveness results. Specifically, since quality circles emphasize work on task issues, there is limited need to interact with organizational members outside of the

immediate work environment. In addition, this limited scope results in little company wide information being provided to the group members. Seibold and Shea suggest that this could reduce the quality of decisions, management support for groups' suggestions, and therefore, effectiveness.

However, quality of work life and Scanlon programs differ from quality circles in the scope of the decisions addressed and the range of employees involved in the groups. This increases the need for broader organizational information and the ease with which it can be attained. The result is a larger communication network addressing broader communication content, which leads to greater program effectiveness.

Model of informal participation. Harrison (1985) applies Weick's (1979) theory of organizing in an alternate conceptualization of the participation process. She critiques traditional approaches to participative decision making, suggesting they all follow a unidirectional model of the establishment of participation that assumes a proactive superior and reactive subordinates. Two key concerns with traditional models are that they present an "inconsistent ontological view of human behavior" and that they do not "specify precisely how participation gets implemented on an informal basis" (p. 96). First, by presenting subordinates as reactors it ignores theory and research indicating "subordinates' influence [of] managerial authority and selection of leadership style" (p. 96). Second, unlike formal participation initiatives with rules and regulations to govern the process,

informal participation has no organizational legitimization. Therefore, other means must be found to account for the informal establishment of participative activity. Harrison (1985) theorizes that

> informal participation is established by means of tacit understandings negotiated in communication between superiors and their respective subordinates. The outcome of these negotiations is organizational knowledge about the range and depth of subordinate influence in the work unit and the means by which that influence is exercised. (p. 97)

Weick's theory would explain the development of this organizational knowledge by the processes of enactment, selection, and retention. Harrison emphasizes that both superiors and subordinates are involved in all three processes.

Research on Participative Processes

Key foci of participation research[2] are its outcomes, antecedents, and processes. This order represents to some degree the chronological progression of areas of interest. Early research focused on organizational outcomes. Then it

[2]Participation has a presence in technology literature, specifically, in the area of "groupware." Although this body of work is related to the concepts presented here, it is outside the scope of this study. Much of the emphasis in this work has been on group/member or task characteristics in relation to outcomes. Communication scholars have shown limited interest in this area (Scott, 1999). However, participation has been addressed as a communication outcome (e.g., Campbell, 1997 in videoconference use & Ciborra & Patriotta, 1996 comparison with face-to-face).

became important to discover what elements initiate the participation process that leads to these outcomes. Finally, as more communication scholarship centered on participation, research began to examine the unfolding nature of participation as process.

Outcomes

Organizational, unit, and individual outcomes have been addressed in the research. This section begins with two studies. The first explores participation and organizational outcomes of satisfaction and performance. The second investigates individual outcomes in an employee involvement effort. The section ends with several studies addressing effectiveness at the unit level.

Marshall and Stohl (1993) sought to capture the "inherent communicative nature of participation" by applying a network approach to their study of members of 14 self-managing work teams (p. 137). The organization's participative management structure followed a sociotechnical design (i.e., increased individual and team involvement to maximize organizational performance). Participation was conceptualized as both empowerment and involvement. First, empowerment occurs by developing key relationships in order to gain greater control over one's own organizational life. Second, involvement is individual effort to integrate into the communication system by taking advantage of opportunities to interact.

Data collected indicate that degree of involvement and empowerment in the communication system related differentially to worker satisfaction and

managerial assessment of worker performance. This finding showed that "examining emergent communication activities [can help] explain further the differences in performance among workers within the same participatory context" (Marshall & Stohl, p. 153). In addition, they found that whether an employee perceived his or her participation as simple involvement or actual empowerment influenced both job satisfaction and job performance.

In a study of quality circles on a U. S. Air Force base, Steel and Lloyd (1988) examined a wide variety of outcomes (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral). Their survey addressed issues of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, sense of control over the job, and perceptions of the work setting. Results from data collected 14 months apart indicate that participation in a quality circle influenced perceptions of trust, perceptions of competency to influence others, and perceptions of congruency between personal and organizational goals.

The next three studies explore a special category of outcome, effectiveness. Each addresses a group context (i.e., quality circle, self-managing work team, and designated work team). Therefore, effectiveness is conceptualized and measured in relation to the group rather than the organization.

First, Stohl (1987) investigates quality circle effectiveness using a network approach. She found that "bottom line" effectiveness was influenced by the embedded nature of the quality circle. Output of quality circles whose network links crossed into the larger organization was more often accepted and

implemented than that of circles who remained insular and worked parallel to other organizational activity. However, members' perceptions of effectiveness were based on affective issues. Members made their judgments in light of whether group meetings were enjoyable experiences or whether the other members of the group were attractive. This suggests the possibility that participation activities are more important to participants as a means to meet social needs rather than organizational goals.

Next, Spreitzer, Cohen, and Ledford (1999) explore factors of self-managing work teams and their relationship to team effectiveness. Research was conducted in two service organizations to expand the understanding of a concept predominately studied in the manufacturing context. Four factors were tested against effectiveness. First, team design included the dimensions of variety, feedback, identity, autonomy, and significance. Second, employee involvement context addressed power, information, rewards, and training. Third, team leadership characteristics involved the following behaviors: encourages criticism, rehearsal, goal setting, self-reinforcement, high expectations, and self-observation. Finally, team characteristics included coordination, stability, norms, expertise, and innovation. They found that work design, team characteristics, and an employee involvement context predicted team effectiveness. However, team leadership was not significant for effectiveness and sometimes related negatively.

Third, contradictory findings for leadership occur in a study of education professionals who volunteered to participate in a project as work team members. Hirokawa and Keyton (1995) investigate factors that facilitate and inhibit team effectiveness. They identify three sets of factors from the literature: individual influences, structural properties of the group, and organizational properties. The research design utilized group members' perceptions of the various components of each factor. Effectiveness was conceptualized and measured in terms of task accomplishment. Overall the findings suggest that effectiveness is influenced by elements from all three factors tested. Of the perceived facilitators, the four found to discriminate between effective and ineffective groups are compatible work schedules, information resources, interested/motivated group members, and good group leadership.

Antecedents

Research suggests that individual and organizational variables serve as antecedents to participation. This section begins with one example of research on individual variables. The next study addresses effectiveness as an outcome but tests a model of organizational influences that lead to participation. Third, organizational influences on team success are examined. Fourth, a study of informal participation explores communication in the organization and its impact

on the creation of a participative environment. The final study presented combines both individual and organizational antecedents to the empowerment of organizational members.

First, Janssen, de Vries, and Cozijnsen (1998) conducted two studies exploring cognitive style and likelihood to voice change-suggestions to supervisors. The two cognitive styles addressed were the predisposition toward innovation or adaptivity. They found that adapters are more likely to voice conventional ideas when they are dissatisfied while innovators are more likely to voice novel ideas when they are satisfied with work. In both cases the respondents perceived their supervisors as effective voice managers.

Next, we turn to research that addresses issues of organizational climate or culture as a context for participation. First, in a study of high involvement work processes and organizational effectiveness, Vandenberg et al. (1999) argue that the majority of employees must perceive that they are involved and this "requires the construction of a culture or climate of involvement" (p. 328). They test a model based on Lawler's (1986) set of four mutually reinforcing attributes that influence participation in organizations: power, information, reward, and knowledge (PIRK). Their model connects business practices, the PIRK attributes, employee morale, and effectiveness. They actually tested a total of four models and found statistically significant worsening of fit for all models other than the hypothesized model. For example, they found lack of support for the model that

proposed no effect for the PIRK attributes on employee morale variables and then no effect for morale on organizational effectiveness. Their findings support the synergistic nature of the PIRK attributes and the systemic nature of participation.

In a study utilizing similar organizational attributes, Spreitzer et al. (1999) highlight the critical nature of the organizational-level factors on team success (see presentation under "Outcomes" for greater detail). Their findings influence our understanding of organizational context and issues of empowerment and motivation. Specifically, they suggest that organizations can "create the conditions for employees to exercise good judgment by providing team members with the power to influence decisions, performance feedback, training in interpersonal and technical skills, and rewards linked to business results" (p. 361).

The next study is an attempt to overcome the "neglect," in participative decision-making models, of subordinates' roles in establishing a participative environment. Harrison (1985) employs network theory and techniques to explore the communication behaviors of superiors and subordinates relative to decision making (p. 93). Participative decision making was conceptualized as a socially constructed phenomenon defined through superior/subordinate interaction. Results suggest that, "for subordinates, the nature of communication with the superior is an important characteristic of the participative environment" (p. 113). Both quantity and quality of the communication was strongly associated with participation in decision making.

Finally, in their study of employees' perceptions of empowerment, Chiles and Zorn (1995) argue that "self-efficacy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for empowerment in organizations" (p. 4). The fact that employees may feel personally capable of accomplishing some task does not indicate that they perceive the freedom to act. The possibility of constraint suggests the need to study the organizational practices that enable or inhibit personal control when investigating empowerment. Chiles and Zorn label this variable "macro-level culture" and operationalize it as "individuals' interpretations of organizational patterns and structures" (p. 5). In conceptualizing this variable, they emphasize the communication practices in the organization.

Results indicate that three of five influence categories were significantly correlated with employees' perceptions of empowerment: verbal persuasion (positive), emotional arousal (positive), and macro-level culture (negative). Based on Bandura's (1977, 1986) work verbal persuasion referenced communication designed to persuade employees of their competence to perform a given task and emotional arousal was defined as stirring employees' emotions in order to inspire. Macro-level culture was based on general perceptions of organizational-level influences. Chiles and Zorn (1995) found that macro-level culture held the strongest correlation with perceptions of empowerment and was the only variable to correlate significantly with both empowerment dimensions: competence and authority.

Additionally, underlying dimensions of each influence category emerged from coding of the interview data. The dimensions are listed in their order of frequency for each of the significant categories. First, dimensions of the verbal persuasion category highlighted the importance of communication between employees and their superiors. These dimensions include assessment of general communication with the employees' supervisors, specific recognition from the supervisor, accessibility of the supervisor, communication with the supervisor about task, and specific recognition from others (e.g., peers, superiors, and subordinates). Second, emotional arousal had three dimensions: enjoying or disliking a task or job, perceptions of the employee's supervisor (i.e., leadership ability, characterization of employee-supervisor relationship), and positive feelings about other aspects of the organization. Third, the macro-level culture category contained six dimensions: comments about positive management practices, feeling informed of relevant organizational information, comments about a positive working atmosphere, recognition and feedback from co-workers, relevance of organizational goals, and clarity of communication in general.

Process

Participative process research has addressed micro and macro issues in the organization. This section begins with a descriptive piece categorizing the micro processes of decision-making groups. The next two studies address macro issues influencing participative processes. The first looks at a total quality initiative and

the second, democratic processes in a long-standing system of cooperatives. The final two pieces of research address individual empowerment. The first is a descriptive piece exploring issues of voice. The second emphasizes the influence of societal context on organization members' feelings of empowerment.

First, in a group process study describing types of participation in natural decision-making groups, Scheerhorn, Geist, and Teboul (1994) sought to categorize and then compare the different communication activities of the groups. Based on coding of videotaped meetings they found five activities: information dissemination, decision making/problem solving, coordination/organization, motivation, and affiliation. The categorization of communicative episodes into these activities revealed that information dissemination occurred twice as often as decision making and that coordination and decision making were equal in frequency.

Next, we turn to macro influences on process. First, through exploration of a total quality initiative, Fairhurst and Wendt (1993) found that often program implementation simply ignores the social and decision-making aspects of the group process. They discovered a gap in the application of Deming's philosophy. He calls for teamwork, technical tools based in statistical control processes, and consumer-focused business practices. Explanation of the element of teamwork was limited in the quality training. Jargon related to team activity was used in the training but no attention was given to developing process skills.

Second, exploring the issue of values and workplace democratization, Cheney (1999) addresses the question of whether it is possible to maintain a core set of social values in an organization while growing, becoming more complex, and being financially successful. He studied the Mondragon Corporation, a large system of cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain. In general, cooperatives value democracy, equality, and solidarity. Their structure is a blend of direct and representative democracy. A key concern for many members of the organization was the influence of market pressures on their form of organizing. Perhaps in response to this pressure, internal values seemed at risk.

Cheney (1999) found that employees have a strong sense of contradiction -- feeling that there is something "disingenuous about an organization demanding more 'participation' in the form of work intensification while lauding the 'entrepreneurial' possibilities in a specific job or on a work team" (p. 154). He believes that everyone ought to have some capacity to affect conditions and requirements of work; however, he indicates that the right of self-determination at work extends beyond the currently popular notion of self-management. His findings suggest two broad levels for assessing the presence of democratic values in the workplace. First, determine the specific opportunities of employees to contribute to the development of business strategy. Second, determine the ways that participation itself is open to negotiation by employees.

More specifically, Cheney (1999) determined eight factors influencing the "vitality" of their democracy:

> (1) the performance of representative social bodies; (2) the equitable distribution of benefits and losses through individual incentives and collective ownership; (3) education in cooperativism and other core organizational values; (4) the allowance for (and benefit from) internal disagreements and dissent; (5) the presence throughout the organization of an authentic concern for the well-being of individual employees; (6) the use of vital feedback loops within the organizations for purposes of a circular flow of information; (7) the promotion of cooperative ideals beyond the walls of the organization; (8) and the degree of openness to negotiating the meaning of organizational democracy. (p. 132)

Finally, we look at issues in the process of individual empowerment. In a study of women and ordination in five religious denominations, Schmidt (1996) presents a number of data nuggets that address the process of empowerment. First, a lack of empowerment is evident through perceptions of limitations on voice and denied access to the decision-making process. One respondent highlighted communication practices and their relation to inclusion: "I don't communicate in the good-old-boy-style, and if the men that I work with identify power and

respectability by how well you can do the old-boy thing, then I am very much an outsider." Another woman suggests that token membership does not guarantee true participation, indicating that she holds a position on a decision-making body yet "there is always that insidious feeling that the real decisions are made by the in-crowd which are the old boys." In addition, one woman's comment suggests that denied access can motivate members to desire involvement, "Now I'm just distressed enough to want to make a difference."

Next, Schmidt (1996) indicates that although bureaucratic change can create the opportunity for inclusivity, there must be a "will to do the job" (p. 38). A female administrator responding to an early draft of part of Schmidt's work indicates that what is needed is "servant leadership which values the full expression of the gifts of those whom one leads" (p. 39). She continues with a qualitative description of the process of her own empowerment. "In ways large and small, they [male clergy] have asked for my input, referred power to me when they could, quoted me when I had something smart to say, credited me when it was my work/idea/project that enhanced their ministry, and had the integrity to tell me directly when they felt I was off-base" (p. 39).

In the next study, we see the reciprocal nature of empowerment process, beginning at the individual level, moving to the organizational level, and then once again empowering the individual. This study of women dairy farmers in India explores empowerment of individuals during a community development

program as an attempt to encourage and equip individuals to become active, contributing members of an organization. Empowerment was defined as the "process through which an individual perceives that s/he controls his or her situation" (Shefner-Rogers, Rao, Rogers, & Wayangankar, 1998, p. 319). Perceptions of empowerment were measured in the women of eight villages. Almost half of these women recently attended a community development training program designed to (a) raise their consciousness to realize the class and power contradictions in the current system, and (b) indicate the means through which they could alter these power relationships.

One goal of the development program was to create a "collective of empowered individuals practicing participatory decision making (see Cheney, 1995), through which the collectivity encourages individuals to become more empowered" (Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998, p. 320). Results indicate that women who participated in the training program were more empowered than those who did not participate. Evidence of this empowerment was seen in women dairy farmers who participated in empowering activities through their women's clubs and became members of their village dairy cooperative, gaining the ability to control earnings. In addition to the attitudinal and behavioral changes in the women, there were positive outcomes for the organizations involved. For example, the cooperatives gained new members and overall milk production increased.

Conclusions from the study suggest that a "dialogic communication process can increase the feelings of empowerment" among this population, and that this type of communication can alter power relationships (p. 336). In this example, we see the reciprocal nature of empowerment beginning at the individual level, moving to the organizational level, and then once again empowering the individual. The study also suggests that the changes in power relationships that occur when individuals are empowered can benefit the collective.

Summary of Conclusions: State of the Art

Traditionally, organizational outcome research has been related to performance, satisfaction, commitment, turnover, and effectiveness. First, Marshall and Stohl (1993) conclude that conceptualizing participation as communication activity and exploring variance in participants' communication networks can help explain why members of the same participatory context can exhibit different levels of performance. In addition, they found that job performance and job satisfaction differed by employees' perceptions of their participation as empowerment or simple involvement (Marshall & Stohl, 1993).

Next, Shadur et al. (1999) found that perceptions of involvement were strongly related to employees' organizational commitment. Commitment and intent to leave are related variables. Vandenberg et al., (1999) suggest that

increased training in participatory skills can reduce turnover. In contrast to Shadur et al.'s finding, overall organizational commitment was not significant in a study of quality circles; however, perceptions of trust, and congruency between personal and organizational goals increased through participation (Steel & Lloyd, 1988). An interesting personal outcome of the same study was increased perceptions of competency to influence others.

In addition, the outcome of team effectiveness has been predicted by variables at multiple levels of the organization. First, Spreitzer et al. (1999) found work design, team characteristics, and an involving employee context influenced effectiveness. In another study, compatibility of work schedules, information resources, motivated group members, and good group leadership differentiated high and low effectiveness in work teams (Hirokawa & Keyton, 1995). Finally, quality circle effectiveness was found to be greater for those circles whose members participated in a larger communication network by developing relationships with non-circle members at various levels of the organization.

More salient to the research proposed here are the conclusions drawn from work on the antecedents of organizational participation. First, the findings of Janssen, de Vries, and Cozijnsen's (1998) studies have several theoretical implications. They extended Hirschman's (1970) model of voice by introducing the cognitive style dimension of adaptation-innovation as a personality variable that impacts employees' choice to voice to their supervisors (Janssen, de Vries, &

Cozijnsen, 1998). In addition, following Whitey and Cooper's (1989) suggestion to define voice in specific clear ways, they found meaningful distinctions between voice of conventional ideas that suggest improvement and novel ideas that propose new ways of doing things.

Next, conclusions regarding organizational context and participation are of key interest. First, in testing a model that connects business practices, the PIRK attributes, employee morale, and effectiveness, Vandenberg et al. (1999) conclude that organizations must move beyond instituting a single involving practice for greatest effectiveness. No single initiative can alter all of the organizational systems influencing participation.

Second, findings relative to context often reference the influence of communication on the organizational environment. For example, Chiles and Zorn (1995) make two key contributions through their study. First, they highlight the importance of communication to empowerment. This supports the conceptualization of empowerment as process, strengthens the call to communication scholars to conduct research on empowerment, and expands the direction of that research by providing specific types of communication that relate to empowerment. In another example, Harrison, (1985) concludes that the quantity and quality of communication with a superior is an important characteristic of the participative climate.

Second, Chiles and Zorn's (1995) addition of macro-level culture to the model of factors influencing empowerment expands our conceptualization of empowerment and provides a valuable tool for future research. By suggesting that empowerment is more influenced by organizational issues than personal/interpersonal issues, the study implies that individual manager's attempts to increase employees' perceptions of empowerment may be limited by organizational structures and patterns that are disempowering.

Finally, research on issues of process also highlights communication. Conclusions in this area address elements of process in decision-making groups, training as part of the empowering process, values and the democratic process, and communication and constraint. One study found that the process in decision-making groups involves information dissemination twice as often as actual decision making (Scheerhorn et al., 1994). In another study addressing group participation, Fairhurst and Wendt (1993) conclude that skills that support team activity are often absent in total quality training. This suggests that participation initiatives can be in operation without the needed skill development for participants (e.g., group communication skills).

Cheney's (1999) work on values and workplace democracy describes the impact of market pressure on democratic values in the organization. Over time, some traditionally capitalistic organizational characteristics have emerged within the representative coop structure. Participation remains high, but its nature has

changed from a focus on organizational governance to emphasis on improving productivity through work teams. Cheney concludes that these changes are a result of altered values. He suggests eight factors that can effect democratic process in the organization. They emphasize values education and open negotiation of the meaning of democracy in the organization. In addition, key communication issues include an open communication climate and consistent use of feedback loops.

Finally, Schmidt's (1996) findings suggest that power in the organization can be differentiated in subtle ways. For example, one participant felt that her communication style distinguished her from those with decision-making power. Schmidt concludes that bureaucratic change can create opportunity for participation, but those in direct lines of authority can constrain the level of involvement. Training that enables empowerment may require raising the consciousness of power contradictions in the current system and indicating how an organizational member could alter the existing power relationships (Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998).

Critique: What is Missing and What is Needed

Research in the area of participation is broad and is initiated from divergent perspectives. Key elements missing or addressed in limited ways are the participant's perspective, informal participation, why participation varies in the

same participative context, and why initiatives often fail to meet effectiveness expectations. In addition, organizational participation theory seems limited to theoretical approaches that motivate participation and models that address elements of the participative process.

Vandenberg et al. (1999) critique much of the current literature that only tests relationships between organizational practices and organizational outcomes. They argue that valuable information is lost in such studies because the "individual is the one who must interpret the business practices and policies in his or her own way" and therefore, those practices and policies are best operationalized by including employee interpretations (p. 325). Rather than follow a deterministic model of empowerment that suggests that management can, through a one-way influence process, empower employees, it is critical to address the multiple parties involved in the process (Harrison, 1985).

What is needed is a more fully developed theory of the participant. By knowing the types of participants that actually exist and why they respond to participative opportunity the way they do, future research can be grounded in this single consistent human element of organizational participation. Results from this line of research can expand our understanding of why participation varies in the same participative context and why initiatives often fail to meet effectiveness expectations. In addition, informal participation is highlighted.

A Proposed Theoretical Reformulation

This section begins with a description of the conceptualization of participation used in this study. Next the purpose of the proposed reformulation is presented. What follows is a description of the three components of participation type. Finally, an explication of the proposed model of participation classes suggests general employee perspectives on the involving environment found in their organizations. Specifically, this environment is embedded in the overall culture and climate of the organization.

Current Conceptualization

Drawing on the discussion of the various forms of participation found in practice and in past research, the conceptualization of participation presented in this study is narrowed to participation that is communicative in nature. First, in Albrecht's (1988) definition of empowerment, it is characterized as an "interactional process" in which a sense of personal control results from the belief that one's "communication behavior" can influence others in desired ways (p. 380). This perspective on participation is grounded in communication behaviors. In addition, Stohl (1995) describes participation as the "discretionary interactions of individuals or groups resulting in cooperative linkage which exceed minimal coordination needs" (p. 5). Thus, some definitions of participation in the literature are based on communicative behaviors and provide a foundation for the conceptualization presented here.

Second, communicative participation can be clarified by contrasting it with other forms of participation in the organization. For example, individual employee decision making regarding how to accomplish job tasks is addressed in the participation literature as a behavioral manifestation of employee involvement and an outcome of empowerment. However, this participation has no communication component. Another form of behavioral participation supports a sense of organizational community in relation to the larger social structure and includes activities such as involvement in United Way campaigns, contributing to food drives, or giving blood for a blood drive. Again, the participation is not communicative in nature.

Third, communicative participation can be clarified through example. Examples fall into multiple categories and can be presented at different levels of specificity. Several general participation situations include involvement in problem solving, involvement in group decision making, and attempts to influence others. More specifically, communicative participation would include behaviors such as making suggestions for change, challenging others, contributing new ideas, contributing opinions, providing feedback, and airing complaints or grievances.

Purpose

The purpose of this model is to identify different classes of participants that are salient to the actual choice to participate. It is difficult to gain a unified

understanding of organizational participation due to its many forms and the varied motivations behind participative programs. However, employees and their responses to participative opportunity are found in every context involving participation. Therefore, what is needed is a theory of participant classification that increases our understanding of participation by exploring the single perspective that cuts across its various forms, the participant. However, use of the label "participant" assumes that all categories reference participating individuals. A key motivation behind this research is to represent as many different responses to participative opportunity as possible. Therefore, the label "participation" will be used in the typology of classes to include all on the continuum between participation and nonparticipation.

I propose that participation types can be identified by the possession of one, two, or three of the following cognitive attributes: (a) motivation to participate, (b) sense of opportunity, and (c) relevant self-efficacy. Knowing the types of participants that actually exist and why they respond to participative opportunity the way they do sets the stage for future work in participation theory. In addition, it specifies how management can influence participation by treating employees differentially.

Components

The preceding discussion of the participation literature allows for the extraction of just a few attributes of organizational members that can help define

participation classes. Motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy are key psychological variables that influence organizational members in their choices regarding participation. Theories of empowerment suggest the need for both self-efficacy and the authority to act to enable specific behaviors. Chiles and Zorn (1995) argue that models of empowerment that only address self-efficacy are inadequate based on the significance of their findings for macro-level influences. Based on their exploration of organizational culture, perceptions of an involving environment will impact feelings of empowerment. Therefore, employees' sense of participative opportunity as well as their self-efficacy influences empowerment. However, perceptions of empowerment are only part of the equation that leads to actual participation. Additionally, motivation is a precursor to choice. Therefore, motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy combine in unique ways to create different participation types with different expected behavioral patterns regarding communicative participation. In this section, I will define the three components of participation class.

Motivation. Motivation references "the internal processes that activate, guide, and maintain behavior (especially goal-directed behavior)" (Baron, 1991, p. 1). Contemporary approaches to motivation are grounded in cognitive theories. Vroom (1964) presented some of the earliest work in this area suggesting that motivation is determined by a person's preference for a certain outcome (valence) and the degree to which these outcomes are believed to be probable (expectancy).

The combination of these two variables results in the choice to perform an act. Here, motivation to perform communicative acts of participation is the focus.

Several antecedents that influence organizational members' degree of motivation to participate include individual needs fulfillment (e.g., achievement, affiliation, and power), perceived value of the participation, and civic virtue. First, the opportunity to meet higher order ego needs motivates specific behavior. For example, the participation/satisfaction link indicates that one way to satisfy higher order ego needs (i.e., self-expression, respect, independence, and equality) is through participative decision making (Monge & Miller, 1988). In the job characteristics model, a correspondence between individual needs and job characteristics actuates employees' job attitudes (e.g., satisfaction). Additionally, increased job satisfaction is proposed to increase worker motivation.

Second, intrinsic task motivation influences organizational members' perceived value of participation. Two of the four cognitive dimensions of empowerment presented by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) are particularly salient to intrinsic motivation: meaningfulness and impact. Belief that participation will make a difference in meaningful ways can motivate behavior through intrinsic rewards.

Third, civic virtue consists of behaviors reflecting responsible participation in, involvement with, and concern about the life of the employing organization (Van Dyne, et al., 1994). According to political philosophy, an active

citizen will display obedience, loyalty, and participation (Inkeles, 1969 as cited in Van Dyne, et al., 1994). Organizational members who value citizenship in the workplace as a personal ethic will be motivated to participate through intrinsic rewards.

In addition, organizational factors can influence motivation to participate. Within a model of group effectiveness presented by Hirokawa and Keyton (1995) group member motivation is "facilitated by both organizational and group factors" (p. 429). The organizational factors include a reward system, a support system, and coaching and process training. These motivating factors should extend to all participative contexts. However, paradoxical processes can serve to demotivate employees. When revisiting a classic article that outlines the ways in which goals and rewards are often mismatched, Kerr (1995) indicates that management hopes for employee involvement and empowerment in the organization yet they reward tight control over operations and resources.

Sense of opportunity. Sense of opportunity reflects the perception of organizational members that they have the opportunity to communicatively participate in the organization. Written policies supporting involvement, practices that invite involvement, and involving organizational designs may indicate the presence of participative opportunity, however, it is the organizational members' perceptions of opportunity that create the potential for actual participation

(Vandenberg et al., 1999). This sense of opportunity has both an organizational component and a unit component.

The first component is based on the perception of a forum for participation (i.e. a participation program or an involving climate). For example, Wendt (1998) found that "although many employees want to share personal stories and have useful ideas and strong arguments to make, they tend not to disclose this information when the norms and climate are not conducive" (p. 365). This suggests that employees need to perceive that there is real opportunity for them to participate before they are willing to contribute.

The second condition is determined by members' perceptions of their direct managers. If members feel that their direct line of supervision supports participation, then the actual presence of choice is confirmed. If however, they perceive constraint on their choice to participate coming from direct management, their sense of opportunity would decrease. When managing for participation, employee language can provide insight into their perceptions of trust and sense of opportunity. Barge (1994) indicates that hedges, self-denigration, unnecessary qualifiers, and disclaimers indicate employees' feeling that they are not empowered and that their environment is one of distrust and low support. The organizational and unit components can operate in tandem in relation to structured forms of participation or separately with the unit component influencing the sense of opportunity for informal participation.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can generally be defined as a belief about one's competence. According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, it is a momentary belief that one can perform a specific task to a certain performance level. Prior to 1982, self-efficacy was primarily conceptualized in relation to specific situations. However, Gardner and Pierce (1998) broaden the definition by removing the temporal element and the specific level of achievement. They indicate that self-efficacy is a "belief about the probability that one can successfully execute some future action or task or achieve some result" (p. 49). Believing that self-efficacy can be specific or generalized, Sherer et al. (1982) developed a measure of generalized self-efficacy for application in psychotherapy.

For this study, both specific and general self-efficacy are important. Specific self-efficacy is related to the communication skills involved in participation. It is a belief about the probability that one can successfully communicate in the participation process or achieve a desired result through that communication. General self-efficacy is important to the participants' belief that they are capable and generally possess some level of control. Generalized self-efficacy has been shown to impact organization-based self-esteem, which then influenced employee performance (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). Therefore, generalized self-efficacy may impact employees' belief that they have something to contribute through its influence on levels of self-esteem.

Model of Participation Classes

To this point, I have argued for the inclusion of three variables in the characterization of participation type. These participation classes are groups of employees who respond to participative opportunity in differentiated ways. Although the factors are interdependent, they are distinct elements that influence employee response to participative opportunity. I now proceed to an analysis of the participant types that results from the various combinations of these attributes, as shown in Table 2.

The salience of an attribute to the choice to participate is determined by the degree to which the participant possesses the psychological variable. When considering either high or low levels of each attribute, eight classes logically emerge – three possessing high levels of only one attribute (4, 5, & 8), three possessing low levels of only one attribute (2, 3, & 7), one possessing high levels of all attributes (1), and one possessing low levels of all attributes (6).

However, it is the conceptual nature of each attribute in combination that suggests different stances toward participative opportunity. There are four general approaches to involvement in the organization. First, the engager can either be participation class 1 where all attributes are high or class 2 where only self-efficacy is low. In this case, the high motivation and strong sense of opportunity may lead the employee to overcome the issues of efficacy in order to participate.

Table 2

Participation Typology

Participation Class	Motivation	Sense of Opportunity	Self-efficacy	General Approach
1	High	High	High	Engager
2	High	High	Low	
3	High	Low	High	Lobbyer
4	High	Low	Low	
5	Low	Low	High	Coaster
6	Low	Low	Low	
7	Low	High	High	Avoider
8	Low	High	Low	

Second, the lobbyer can be participation class 3 where only the sense of opportunity is low. High levels of motivation and self-efficacy may influence the employee to lobby for greater opportunity. Participation class 4 can also be conceptualized as someone who may lobby for change. However, only motivation is high, therefore, the barriers to participation may be considered too great. The third general stance is someone who coasts in the current participative environment and includes classes 5 and 6. Participation class 5 is only high in self-efficacy. They perceive little to no opportunity and have limited motivation to participate. Class 6 has low levels of all attributes. Therefore, participation is not a

salient issue for classes 5 and 6. Finally, classes 7 and 8 can be characterized as avoiders of participative opportunity. Class 7 perceives opportunity and is highly efficacious but lacks motivation. Beyond simple avoidance, class 7 may also seek to reduce the sense of opportunity either by altering their perceptions or attempting to change the involving environment. In addition to low motivation, class 8 also lacks the necessary self-efficacy to respond positively to the perceived opportunity.

An even broader categorization of participation class can be distinguished based on the motivation variable: employees who are involved and those who are not involved. First, it is important to understand why motivation is the defining variable. By definition, motivation activates behavior (Baron, 1991). Therefore, it is the key variable regarding individual choice to participate. While sense of opportunity can suggest the presence of a choice, and level of self-efficacy may influence the intensity with which an employee pursues his or her choice; it is individual motivation that drives participative choice. Second, the distinction created by degree of motivation indicates whether or not an employee chooses involvement. Both the engager and lobbyer have high levels of motivation and are pursuing involvement to some degree. However, the coaster and the avoider have low levels of motivation and either do nothing about involvement or when the opportunity is present seek ways to remain uninvolved.

Research Questions

The distinction of participation classes is the most fundamental piece of this theoretical perspective. Therefore, it is important to discover if they can be reliably identified. Once distinguished, will these classes be a parsimonious set or a large number of types that deny interpretation? The explication of the set of eight participation classes in the model is purely theoretical; therefore, it is necessary to test the model empirically. The following research question addresses the extent to which these types exist in the organizational context.

RQ1: To what extent does the proposed model linking organizational members' motivation, sense of participative opportunity, and self-efficacy match actual patterns found by clustering participation types?

Dimensions of Participation

In addition to understanding the various stances individuals take toward the opportunity to influence their organizations, it is also important to determine the differing types of communication that distinguish dimensions of participation. Rather than address participation in terms of its outcomes (e.g., a decision made, a problem solved, or an increase in quality on the production line), there may be more value in creating dimensions of the process. These dimensions may lead to theorizing that ultimately can inform intervention in organizational systems.

Therefore, I ask the following research question to address the types of communication that influence organizational process.

RQ2: What communication behaviors are associated with different dimensions of participation?

Participation Classes and Communication

Once participation classes are determined and dimensions of communicative participation behavior have been found, it is possible characterize the classes in terms of these behaviors. To the extent that relationships are found, it is possible to conceptualize how the intent behind each class' approach to participative opportunity manifests in the ongoing dialogue of the organization. Characterizing participants as distinct types of communicators in a participative organizational context centers the study of participation in the process and in people. Interest in future directions made possible by this foundation leads me to ask the following research question.

RQ3: How do the participation classes communicate their degree of participation?

Participation Classes and Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined as the basis of an individual's psychological attachment to the organization and is believed to have attitudinal and behavioral components (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). This attachment has been suggested to exist in two factors: normative (internal) and

instrumental (external) commitment (Caldwell, O'Reilly, & Chatman, 1990). These factors are drawn from Kelman's (1958) three bases of attachment: compliance, identification, and internalization. The normative factor of commitment combines identification or a desire for affiliation with the organization and internalization based on the congruence of individual and organizational values. The instrumental factor represents attachment undertaken by the organizational member for specific rewards.

Commitment has been positively related to participation in past research. For example, Shadur, Kienzle, and Rodwell, (1999) indicate that although direction is not clear, feelings of commitment are related to teamwork, participation in decision making, and communication. Additionally, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found a relation to positive manifestations of involvement. These included voluntary participation and other contributions beyond those required by the job description. These findings suggest a link, yet they lack clarity. Given that a relationship exists between various forms of participation and organizational commitment, exploring any distinctions in level of commitment by employees who differ in their approach to participation can inform our understanding of both variables. To further our understanding of differential responses to participation and their link to organizational outcomes, I ask the following research question.

RQ4: How does organizational commitment differ by participation class?

Participation Classes and Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the involving environment reflects a positive emotional state based on the appraisal of organizational elements that contribute to the opportunity to participate. An involving environment can be thought of as one specific element of organizational climate. Schneider (1990) defines climate as organizational members' shared perceptions of formal and informal organizational rewards, expectations, policies, and procedures. A specifically participative climate would support "employee participation in work planning, decision making, and on-the-job problem solving" (Tesluk et al., 1999). This study emphasizes communicative involvement of many types, including contributions that influence policy at multiple levels of the organization.

Two theories are used to explain the more inclusive concept of job satisfaction. The Job Characteristics Model is based on the evaluation of the fit between organizational members' individual characteristics and the elements of their jobs. A key proposition of the theory is that greater fit leads to greater satisfaction. The second approach is Social Information Processing. In this communicative model, interaction with coworkers influences degree of satisfaction as they reveal their opinions and attitudes about the work environment.

The proposed model of participation classes incorporates both theories. First, individual characteristics are represented by self-efficacy and certain

antecedents to motivation. Second, sense of opportunity is influenced by interaction with coworkers. However, a link with general job satisfaction is less valuable to expanding participation theory than understanding the connections between elements that influence participative choice and satisfaction with the participative climate. Therefore, it is important to answer the question of relationship between participation types and level of satisfaction with the "involving environment."

RQ5: How does satisfaction with participation opportunity differ by participation class?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

This exploratory study utilized a self-report questionnaire that was distributed to a wide cross-sectional sample of organizational employees. The convenience sampling method attracted participants from multiple organizational settings in an attempt to access a diverse population in varied participation climates. The survey addressed the variables of motivation, sense of opportunity, self-efficacy, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Additionally, self-report frequency data was gathered regarding communicative participation behaviors. In this research, statistical analysis distinguished five issues: (a) differing participation classes, (b) factors of participative communication behaviors, (c) whether the participation classes engage in different participative communication behaviors, (d) differences by class in level of commitment to the organization, and (e) differences by class in level of satisfaction with the involving environment.

Respondents

A purposive non-random cluster sample was obtained through the use of research assistants. The respondents for this study were 150 employees known to students in the communication department of a mid-south university who work

for a broad range of organizations. The types of organizations (education, financial, manufacturing, religious, sales, and service) represented many sectors of the economy (for-profit, governmental, and non-profit). One goal of this study was to get a diverse sample that included a wide range of experiences with formal and informal participation.

The common characteristic among all members of the population of interest was their status as full-time employees who hold positions below upper management in their organizations. This delineation is based on the authority and scope of involvement in organizational governance naturally assumed by upper management as a part of their job designs. This study sought to explore propensity to participate and therefore, required that the sample be limited to organizational members whose job requirements do not mandate such high levels of involvement.

Descriptive statistics were also gathered. Of those completing the questionnaire, 147 indicated gender: 47 male and 100 female. In addition 155 respondents indicated age with a range from 18 to 64, (M = 38, SD = 9.45). Tenure in the organization ranged from 1 year to 32 years, (M = 7.66, SD = 7.34). The sample's positional makeup consisted of employees involved in direct production (4), direct service to customer base (59), support of another employee (33), supervision of workers (18), and management of supervisors (5). Thirty one respondents indicated "other." Members of the sample came from various size

organizations: small (under 100 staff members; 70 respondents), medium (between 100 and 1000 staff; 38 respondents) and large (over 1000 staff; 42 respondents).

Procedures

College students were utilized as research assistants, with an extra credit incentive as partial motivation for their participation. Students were presented parameters to use as criteria when seeking potential respondents. They were then asked to provide the e-mail addresses of individuals who matched the profile and had initially agreed to participate.

Electronic communication was used to reduce the time lapse between questionnaire distribution and return. Additionally, use of the computer allowed multiple follow-up communications prior to the deadline to encourage participation. When the survey was launched, a group e-mail message was sent utilizing blind copy to protect participant anonymity. The "cover letter" e-mail (see Appendix B) contained the necessary elements for informed consent and the means for accessing the questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Specifically, the placement of a hot web-link in the body of the e-mail enabled participants to access the survey site by double clicking on the hot link. In addition, multiple steps were taken to limit access to the survey to only the targeted individuals. First, entrance into the survey web page was password protected. Second, potential respondents were each given a unique password (i.e.,

the first 25 characters of his/her e-mail address). Many of the addresses indicated the individuals' places of employment, suggesting the responses came from organizational members rather than the students. Third, the software prevented the submission of multiple surveys from a single password.

The software program, Facilitate.com v7.0™ is a web-based tool that allowed participants to respond to the survey on-line. Once they had completed the survey and submit their responses, participants were returned to their e-mail program. In addition to convenience for the respondent, other rationales for use of this technology address issues of anonymity and efficient data handling. First, the technology design assured that participants' names were never connected to their survey responses. This strengthened assurances of confidentiality made by the researcher. Second, data were captured in digital form and could be saved in an excel file for use in statistical analysis. Bypassing data entry saved time and removed the potential for human error during that process.

Measures

Seven variables were measured in this study (see Appendix D-Table 3). Only two existing scales were used: one for organizational commitment and the other for generalized self-efficacy. All other scales were developed by the researcher and based upon the literature. In several cases, adaptation and combination of existing scales allowed for the creation of measures based upon accepted factors of the constructs of interest. In addition, four demographic items

asked the respondents to indicate their gender, age, tenure with the organization, and position type in the organization. Respondents were also asked to provide the number of employees in their organizations and its type.

Six measures were pretested following a *conventional* approach (Presser & Blair, 1994). A convenience sample of 90 full-time workers provided data that allowed for an assessment of reliability and reduction of the measures to reach an ideal scale length. Overall, through factor analysis and interpretation of intercorrelations 63 items were reduced to 43 items. Organizational commitment was reduced from 12 items to 8 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .87. Satisfaction with opportunity to participate was reduced from 7 items to 5 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .95. Motivation was reduced from 7 items to 5 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .77. Sense of opportunity to participate was not reduced and had a Cronbach's alpha of .95. General self-efficacy was reduced from 17 items to 7 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .94. Communication self-efficacy was reduced from 12 items to 8 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .87.

Commitment. Organizational commitment was measured with an 8-item version of O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) scale (see Appendix E). Originally the scale contained 12 items and was based upon three factors: internalization, identification, and compliance. However, Caldwell, Chatman, and O'Reilly (1990) found only two factors: normative and instrumental commitment. The 8-item scale used in this study represents normative commitment. This factor

combines internalization and identification which both represent shared values. Examples of items in the normative factor include "I feel a sense of 'ownership' for this organization rather than being just an employee" and "If the values of this organization were different, I would not be as attached to the organization." Cronbach's alpha was .90. Similarly, Butler and Vodanovich (1992) found internal consistency of the normative subscale to be .87. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Satisfaction. Satisfaction was operationalized as a general positive feeling about the opportunity to influence the organizational process. It was measured with a 5-item scale constructed for this study (see Appendix F). The items address satisfaction with the amount and type of participation opportunity in the organization. For example, items include: "I am content with the number of opportunities I have to participate in this organization" and "I am satisfied with the types of opportunities I have to participate in this organization." Cronbach's alpha was .96. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Participative communication. This variable is conceptualized as individual communication effort that can influence organizational process and is operationalized in a list of specific communication behaviors. Items came from two sources. First, the literature that represents participation as communicative suggests four categories of communication situations that emerge when

combining formal/informal and interpersonal/group dimensions (see Appendix G). For example, "In a formal meeting with my supervisor, I will make suggestions" addresses the formal/interpersonal category. In addition, communication that suggests engagement in participative opportunities and avoidance of such opportunities were created for each category. An item indicating engagement in an informal group situation reads: "When a group of coworkers talk about work issues over break, I join in the conversation." "I remain silent in group meetings" indicates avoidance in a formal/group communication situation. Cronbach's alpha was .89. A 7-point Likert-type response scale addressing frequency (1 = never: 7 = always) was used.

Motivation. A 5-item scale was constructed by the researcher to measure individuals' general desire to participate in their organization through communication (see Appendix H). However, it does not specify which antecedents lead to this psychological variable. The communication behavior was operationalized as "talk about work-related issues" with others from the work context. This phrase captures communication occurring in work or social settings, which can have either a positive or negative affect. In addition, the items specify the communication partner to be an organizational member, thus excluding conversations with a significant other (e.g., spouse over dinner or father over the phone). To further participants' focus on participative communication, this section follows the list of communication behaviors in the survey. For example,

items addressing motivation include "I like to discuss work related issues with other organizational members" and "I want to have input into the way my organization operates." Cronbach's alpha was .85. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Sense of opportunity. The 10-item measure for sense of opportunity contains items adapted from two existing scales as well as new items created for this study (see Appendix I). First, one example of an item adapted from Taylor and Bowers' (1972) Survey of Organizations' subscale on decision-making practices is "When decisions are being made at work, the persons affected are asked for their ideas." The second set of items is drawn from Lauderdale's (1999) Survey of Organizational Excellence. These items represent organizational climate issues such as trust ("Most employees trust their coworkers and bosses enough to make suggestions"), support ("Supervisors encourage involvement in problem solving activities"), and communication climate ("Information and knowledge are shared openly in this organization"). An example of a newly created item is "Supervisors are receptive to ideas and suggestions." Cronbach's alpha was .94. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured in two ways to incorporate both general feelings of competence and specific feelings of communication competence. First, the global instrument was adapted from an existing scale

created by Sherer et al. (1982; see Appendix J). A 7-item scale was used. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with items such as "I avoid facing difficulties" and "I feel insecure about my ability to do things." Cronbach's alpha was .88. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Next, to address perceptions of one's ability to engage in effective communication, a 12-item scale was constructed by adapting items from two existing instruments (see Appendix K). Six items were drawn from the Interaction Involvement Scale addressing the components of perceptiveness, attentiveness, and responsiveness (Cegala, 1981). Six items were also drawn from the Communicator Competence Questionnaire (Monge, Backman, Dillard, & Eisenberg, 1982) representing two factors: encoding and decoding. This scale adapts the communicative competence construct for effective measurement within the organizational context. Items were adapted to allow for self-report. Reduction of the overall scale led to an 8-item measure. Examples of items in the final measure follow. "I express my ideas clearly in conversations" "I am sensitive to others' needs in conversations," and "During conversations I listen carefully to others and obtain as much information as I can." Cronbach's alpha was .84. A 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = completely disagree: 7 = completely agree) was used.

Chapter 4

Results

Table 4 presents the intercorrelations, descriptive statistics, and reliability for all the study variables. Reliabilities for the measures were established through coefficient alpha and are sufficient. Note that although many of the variables are significantly correlated, the correlations are low to moderate. The only exception is a strong correlation between sense of opportunity and satisfaction.

Delineation of Participation Classes

Research question one asked the extent of similarity between the proposed model linking organizational members' motivation, sense of participative opportunity, and self-efficacy with actual patterns found in the data. Cluster analysis was used to determine patterns in the data. The process for determining the best solution is interpretive, as no significance statistic exists in the analysis. Several methods can be used to support meaningful groupings. Generally, rules for accepting a solution as a good fit include similarity of solutions when multiple clustering methods are applied, stability determined by relative distance between clusters, and conceptual viability.

First, different linking methods can be used and compared (SPSS Applications Guide, 1999). Clustering was determined by two methods (complete

Table 4

Correlations among Variables with Descriptive Statistics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Motivation		.394**	.372**	.318**	.335**	.262**	.541**
2. Sense of opportunity			.262**	.134	.646**	.800**	.271**
3. Communication Self-efficacy				.423**	.273**	.146	.304**
4. General Self-efficacy					.114	.020	.302**
5. Commitment						.627**	.137
6. Satisfaction							.124
7. Communication Behaviors							
N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
M	5.869	4.855	6.070	6.225	5.111	4.663	4.386
SD	1.028	1.448	.622	.997	1.322	1.812	.812
Minimum/ Maximum	1.6/ 7	1/ 7	3.38/ 7	1.72/ 7	1/ 7	1/ 7	2.21/ 6.75
Coefficient Alpha	.847	.940	.840	.879	.900	.958	.886[a]

[a]Three items were dropped from the 27-item Communication Behavior scale before calculation for conceptual reasons (one item was ambiguous and two items represented behaviors not equally available to all participants). Reliability was high for the original scale with a coefficient alpha of .83, and increased slightly for the 24-item scale with a coefficient alpha of .89.

**$p < .01$.

linkage and Ward's). Results were then compared to determine the presence of highly separated, distinct clusters. The primary method selected for conceptual reasons was complete linkage. It is known to perform well when objects actually form naturally distinct groups and it allows for unequal membership. The similarity measure selected was squared Euclidean distance, which compares the distance between the furthest cases in each set of clusters to determine the next linkage. This is considered a stringent method. Next, Ward's method is known to be efficient, statistically sound, and often creates small groups. It uses an analysis of variance approach to evaluate the distance between the clusters. Comparison of results suggested a five-cluster solution (8 of 150 cases were mismatched creating 94.7% accuracy).

Another tool used in interpretation is the dendogram, which visually represents the linkage of cases at each step, creating a hierarchical tree. A jump in distance between clustering steps can indicate an increase in stability for that set of clusters (Everitt, 1980; SPSS Applications Guide, 1999). The length of the line indicates the distance between clusters or cases that are clustered at a particular step. The first large jump for these data occurred with five clusters.

Finally, interpreting conceptual viability of the clusters may be used to support a cluster solution. Means were used to determine how the clusters differ on the component variables (see Table 5) and then compared with the original

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Predictor Variables by Cluster

Cluster	N	Motivation		Sense of Opportunity		General Self-efficacy		Communication Self-efficacy	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1	12	4.00	*1.12*	5.12	*.85*	6.56	*.43*	5.90	*.52*
2	70	6.57	*.39*	5.91	*.64*	6.61	*.52*	6.33	*.43*
3	23	5.40	*1.03*	2.21	*.72*	6.35	*.70*	5.92	*.81*
4	39	5.67	*.58*	4.45	*.65*	5.90	*.84*	5.86	*.54*
5	6	4.53	*.84*	4.79	*.72*	2.80	*.76*	5.32	*1.05*

model. Four of the eight classes in the model were represented in the data, while three of the four general stances toward participation were present. Specifically, cluster 1 is similar to class 7 (avoider) in the model. Cluster 2 is a match for class 1 (engager). Cluster 3 is similar to class 3 (lobbyer). Cluster 4 is similar to class 1 (engager). Cluster 5 is similar to class 8 (avoider) in the model.

Four of the classes were not distinguishable in these data. The presence of two combinations of variables did not reach critical mass sufficient to generate these clusters. First, low self-efficacy never combined with high motivation to create the second engager class or the second lobbyer class. Second, low

motivation and low sense of opportunity never combined to generate either of the coaster classes.

Once cluster membership was determined, it was possible to explore which variables were better predictors of the cluster pattern. A discriminant function analysis (DFA) was performed to determine the degree of association of the variables to the predictive equation that determined cluster membership. DFA classified group membership with 92.66% accuracy. Wilks' Lambda values were significant at $p < .001$ for three functions, suggesting that they should all be kept in the model. Sense of opportunity contributed most to the model $F(4, 145) = 134.23$, followed by general self-efficacy $F(4, 145) = 84.31$, and motivation $F(4,145) = 70.22$. Communication self-efficacy did not contribute significantly with a Wilk's Lambda of .09.

Characterization of the Participation Classes

Research question one asked how the participation clusters compared to the proposed model of participation classes. However, the data did not always match the extreme high/low distinction used in the model. Therefore, it was important to also utilize other results to characterize the classes more accurately. Results from each research question were combined in Table 6 with a low, moderate, or high rating assigned for each variable by participation class. This enabled an integrative approach to class label creation.

Table 6

Component and Dependent Variable Levels for each Participation Class

Class	Component Variables			
	Motivation	Sense of Opportunity	General Self-efficacy	Communication Self-efficacy
Sideliner	Low	Moderate	High	High
Engager	High	High	High	High
Coaster	Moderate	Low	High	High
Potential Engager	High	Low	High	High
Avoider	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate

	Dependent Variables					
	Formal	Informal	Social	Non-participation	Commitment	Satisfaction
Sideliner	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Engager	High	High	Moderate	Low	High	High
Coaster	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low
Potential Engager	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Low
Avoider	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

Cluster 2 was the only exact match with the model and could clearly be labeled an engager class. Cluster 5 was a match for the avoider approach on motivation and self-efficacy. However, members of cluster 5 indicated a higher sense of opportunity. Based on low scores on the three positive communication dimensions, this cluster was labeled an avoider class.

Members of clusters 1, 3, and 4 exhibit similar communication behaviors: all are moderate or low. Therefore, determining the most useful characteristic

labels required integration of the component variable scores and the commitment and satisfaction scores (see Table 6). Low motivation and a moderate sense of opportunity combined with moderate levels of commitment and satisfaction suggested the label sideliner for cluster 1. These members are not overly pressured by opportunity and choose to sit on the sidelines. Cluster 4 is in some ways an opposite case. Motivation is high, yet opportunity is low. This suggests why satisfaction with the involving environment is moderate to low. Members of this cluster can be conceptualized as potential engagers. Finally, members of cluster 3 are moderately motivated. The presence of motivation and a low sense of opportunity may help create their low levels of satisfaction. This could lead to proactive behaviors to increase participative opportunity. However, they also possess low levels of commitment to the organization. Therefore, it is more likely that their perception of limited opportunity and their low levels of commitment allow these members to coast with small amounts of participation.

Communication Behaviors and Participation

Research question two asks what communication behaviors are associated with different dimensions of participation. A principle-components factor analysis with a varimax rotation was used to test the factor structure of 24 items from the communication behavior measure. Three items (2, 9, & 11) were removed prior to the analysis for conceptual reasons. First, item 2 was ambiguous; providing a logical reason for not contributing to a discussion could be considered effective

participation rather than avoidance. Second, items 9 and 11 dealt with a behavior that may not be an option for all respondents. Other items were more generic and equal opportunity seemed plausible.

An open factor analysis created 6 factors with eigenvalues over one. Several criteria were used to determine which factors to maintain. In addition to an eigenvalue over one, the factor had to contain at least three items. The items had to have primary loadings of .6 and no secondary loadings of more than .4. Three strong factors emerged. However, the scree plot suggested the presence of a fourth reasonable factor. Cross-loadings on the items below .6 seemed to indicate that respondents were not reading them in similar ways. Therefore, to clarify the solution, all items that loaded below .6 were removed and the data were reanalyzed. A second open factor analysis created a 5-factor solution. However, factor 5 was not meaningful and was dropped (a single item loaded above .6, item 7). Item 21 double loaded on factors 2 (.56) and 3 (.57) with values below .6 and was also removed. This reduced the measure to 17 items. The remaining factors indicated the presence of four dimensions of participative communication behavior (see Table 7).

Three factors dealt with varied contexts for participative communication and the fourth dealt with avoidance behaviors. First, the formal dimension was comprised of 6 items that addressed formal meetings (e.g., I contribute ideas or suggestions in group meetings). Next, the informal dimension contained 4 items

Table 7

Factor Loadings of Meaningful Factors Determined Through Principal Components Factor Analysis With Varimax Rotation

Communication Behavior (CB) Scale Items	Factor 1 (Formal)	Factor 2 (Informal)	Factor 3 (Social)	Factor 4 (Non-participation)
CB 6	.858			
CB 1	.855			
CB 3	.809			
CB 8	.748		*.273*	
CB 5	.708			
CB 4	.706			
CB 18		.871		
CB 14		.845	*.213*	
CB 22		.810	*.249*	
CB 27		.754		*.257*
CB 20		*.271*	.760	
CB 12			.749	
CB 16	*.218*		.699	
CB 25	*.205*	*.204*	.683	*.303*
CB 23				.797
CB 24			*.258*	.714
CB 19		*.207*		.687
Eigenvalue	5.523	3.197	1.761	1.438
Explained variance	29%	17%	9%	8%

that addressed communication with coworkers during the process of work (e.g., I get involved in the conversation when a group of coworkers are talking about work during the work process). The third dimension contained 4 items that referenced participative communication in social settings (e.g., In a social setting outside the work environment, I contribute to conversations about work). Finally,

a non-participative dimension was made up of 3 items that indicated avoidance or withdrawal during informal conversations with coworkers (e.g., When a coworker starts to talk to me about organizational policy issues, I let them know that I don't want to talk about it [Example: "They pay me to do my job, not set policy"]). Alpha reliabilities for the resulting scales were acceptable: formal: $M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.16$, $\alpha = .88$, informal $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .77$, social $M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.38$, $\alpha = .87$, and non-participation $M = 5.45$, $SD = 1.04$, $\alpha = .63$. Although the alpha is lower on the fourth factor, conceptually it is important to maintain a non-participation variable.

Participation Classes and Communication

Research question three asked how the participation classes communicate their degree of participation. One-way analysis of variance was utilized to determine whether significant differences in the means of the five participation clusters exist on the four communication behavior dimensions. First, the ANOVA detected a significant difference between the five clusters in terms of formal participative communication $F(4, 145) = 13.27$, $p < .001$. Post hoc tests of between-group differences with Tukey's HSD at $p < .05$ indicated that the engager and avoider classes cause the difference. Avoiders are significantly different from all other classes. Mean differences for each pairing with the avoider class follow: sideliners (Tukey $a = 1.72$), engagers (Tukey $a = 2.51$), coasters (Tukey $a = 1.601$), and potential engagers (Tukey $a = 1.55$). In addition

to the significant pairing with the avoider class, the engager class is significantly different from coasters (Tukey $a = .90$) and potential engagers (Tukey $a = .96$).

Second, differences in informal participative communication were also significant $F(4, 145) = 7.61$, $p < .001$. Post hoc tests indicated that the engager class causes the difference. Significant differences were detected at $p < .05$ between engagers and sideliners (Tukey $a = 1.23$), potential engagers (Tukey $a = .66$), and avoiders (Tukey $a = 1.75$).

Third, no significant differences were found for the remaining two dimensions of communication behavior. Differences in participative communication in social settings were not significant with means ranging from 2.35 to 3.23 across the clusters. Similarly, differences in non-participative communication behavior were not significant with means ranging from 5.27 to 5.63 across the clusters (items used to create this dimension were all reverse coded to allow higher scores to indicate a greater degree of participation). Mean scores indicated that the overall sample engaged in formal participative communication with the greatest frequency followed by informal, then informal in social settings, and finally non-participative communication (see Table 8). Analysis of variance is robust to departures from normality. To check assumptions of equal variance, Levene's test was conducted. Significant findings in the homogeneity of variance test indicate that variances are not equal for

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Communication Behavior Dimensions by Class

Class	Formal		Informal		Social		Non-participation	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Sideliner	4.75[a]	*1.27*	3.56[b]	*.99*	2.35	*1.17*	5.30	*.97*
Engager	5.54[c]	*.92*	4.87[d]	*1.20*	3.22	*1.58*	5.63	*1.07*
Coaster	4.64[e]	*1.10*	4.40	*1.05*	2.85	*1.36*	5.33	*1.04*
Potential Engager	4.58[f]	*.99*	4.18[g]	*1.04*	2.90	*1.09*	5.27	*.95*
Avoider	3.03[h]	*1.24*	2.96[i]	*1.07*	2.67	*.49*	5.28	*1.36*

Note. The following mean pairs are significantly different as indicated by the superscripts: a and h; c and h; e and h; f and h; c and e; c and f; b and d; d and g; d and i.

participative communication in social settings. However, Darlington (1990) notes that the assumption of homoscedasticity is a secondary assumption that can be violated while still allowing useful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

Commitment and Satisfaction by Participation Class

The next two research questions ask how organizational commitment (RQ4) and satisfaction with participation opportunity (RQ5) differ by participation class. A MANOVA was conducted to test these questions due to the

moderate correlation of commitment and satisfaction ($r = .63$, $p < .01$). The test produced a main effect for participation class, $F(4, 145) = 17.77$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .33$ with an indication of significance for each dependent variable. The results of a post hoc test are reported to specify which clusters differ significantly. The Games-Howell multiple comparison test was used based on its design, which allows for unequal variances and unequal sample sizes.

Results indicated that the corrected model for commitment was significant $F(4, 145) = 20.37$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .35$. Commitment explained about 35% of the variance in the clusters for the overall model. The significance of the commitment model was driven by the coaster class with a B of –1.84, $p < .001$. Significant differences were found between coasters and sideliners ($p < .005$), engagers ($p < .001$), and potential engagers ($p < .001$). Although it did not contribute significantly to the model, significant difference was found between potential engagers and engagers ($p < .005$).

The corrected model for satisfaction is also significant $F(4, 145) = 36.88$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .49$. Satisfaction explained about 49% of the variance in the clusters for the overall model. Significance of the satisfaction model was driven by the coaster class with a B of –3.26, $p < .001$ and the potential engager class with a B of –1.18, $p < .05$. Significant differences were found between coasters and sideliners ($p < .001$), engagers ($p < .001$), potential engagers ($p < .001$), and

avoiders ($p < .001$). Additionally, significant difference was found between potential engagers and engagers ($p < .001$).

To sum, these results indicated that only the coaster class accounts for significant variance in both the commitment and satisfaction models, while the potential engager class is a second predictor of satisfaction. It is interesting to consider the differences in sense of opportunity for these clusters, as opportunity contributed most to the distinction of cluster membership. Coasters perceive the lowest sense of opportunity and potential engagers indicate a moderate to low sense of opportunity.

Post Hoc Analysis

Standard Regression Analysis was utilized to determine the effect of each of the variables of class membership (i.e., motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy) on the four communicative behavior dimensions. Four Regression models were constructed and tested for significance.

The results (N after Listwise deletion = 150) for formal communication indicated that three predictor variables explain 35 % of the variance ($F = 19.20$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .35$). Interpretation of the standardized beta weights (see Table 9) for this model indicated that the more elevated employee's general self-efficacy ($t = 4.02$, $p < .001$), motivation ($t = 3.03$, $p < .005$), and sense of opportunity ($t = 2.21$, $p < .05$), the more frequent the use of formal communication behaviors.

The model (*N* after Listwise deletion = 150) for informal communication was significant ($F = 10.85$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .23$). Interpretation of the standardized beta weights (see Table 9) for this model indicated that only motivation ($t = 5.32$, $p < .001$) contributed significantly. This suggests that motivation has the greatest influence on employees' choice to engage in informal participative communication behaviors.

The model (*N* after Listwise deletion = 150) for participative communication in social settings was significant ($F = 3.01$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .08$). Interpretation of the standardized beta weights (see Table 9) for this model indicated that only motivation ($t = 2.84$, $p < .005$) contributed significantly, thus having the greatest influence on participative communication in social settings.

Finally, the model (*N* after Listwise deletion = 150) for non-participative communication behavior was significant ($F = 2.5$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .07$). Two predictor variables explain about 7 % of the variance. Interpretation of the standardized beta weights (see Table 9) for this model indicated that communication self-efficacy ($t = -2.08$, $p < .05$) has the greatest influence on non-participative communication behavior followed by motivation ($t = 1.97$, $p < .05$), which is marginally significant. The direction of influence for the greater predictor suggested that as communication self-efficacy increases non-participation behaviors decrease.

Table 9

Beta Weights for Standard Regression Models: The Effects of Motivation, Opportunity, General Self-efficacy and Communication Self-efficacy on Four Communication Dimensions

Model	Formal		Informal		Social		Non-participation	
	Beta	*B*	*Beta*	*B*	*Beta*	*B*	*Beta*	*B*
Motivation	.24***	.27***	.45***	.53***	.26**	.36**	.18*	.19*
Opportunity	.16**	.13**	-.06	-4.75	.04	4.07	.04	2.79
General Self-efficacy	.30***	.36***	.04	4.67	-.13	-.17	.15	.15
Comm. Self-efficacy	.13	.24	.08	.15	.02	4.85	-.19**	-.32**

*marginally significant at $p < .051$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore communicative participation by delineating participation classes, related communication behaviors, and levels of satisfaction and commitment held by the various participation classes. Specifically, connections between employees' motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy were created to determine unique groupings with differing approaches to participation. Next, categories of communication behaviors related to participation were determined and relationships sought with the participation classes. Finally, the relationships between the participation classes and levels of satisfaction with participative opportunity and organizational commitment were each explored.

Findings and Conclusions

Results of this study lead to several conclusions regarding participation in the workplace. First, these data suggest the presence of five participation classes: sideliner, engager, coaster, potential engager, and avoider, which are marked by varying levels of four dimensions of communication behavior: formal, informal, social, and non-participation. A general indication of their communication behaviors is presented. Then to answer the question "What would members of each of the participation classes look like?" detailed illustrations are provided.

First, sideliners may exhibit moderate amounts of formal communication due to direct requests for participation present in the formal context, however, their low motivation supports a more "hands off" approach to opportunity generally. Therefore, their informal participation is much lower. For example, a sideliner, Susan, has been placed in a problem-solving group by her supervisor. After repeated attempts by the group leader to draw her into the discussion, she offers an idea. Her idea suggests some alteration to an existing practice. Although improving current processes can be valuable, Susan chose this contribution because it required less effort than developing a new way of doing something (for voicing behaviors see Whitney & Cooper, 1989). Once back at her desk, Susan finds herself surrounded by coworkers engaged in a focused discussion on how they might improve response time for customer orders. She recalls a conversation last week with an angry customer who threatened to pull his order if the company couldn't ship by the promise date. Believing that her job is not about solving this problem, Susan quickly dismisses the thought and begins to focus on the orders she needs to process today.

Next, engagers choose to participate in meaningful ways in formal, informal, and social communication while maintaining the lowest occurrence of non-participative behavior. First, consider Bob's behavior during his department's staff meeting. He volunteers to present the conclusions of a quality circle he has been a part of over the previous quarter. When he is finished, he fields questions

from the staff and provides feedback on their observations and suggestions. Second, while walking back to building 2 after the meeting, several coworkers are still talking about the earnings announcement. They are concerned that expected bonuses won't materialize. Bob points out that the general manager would know now if last quarter's bonuses were in jeopardy. He suggests that they check with him directly before getting upset about it. Finally, during a fishing trip with his buddy from work, Bob shares a work related concern. They start to talk about the bonus policy the new sales manager put in place. Bob questions the change, suggesting that this manager doesn't know how to incorporate equity issues into an incentive plan. Wanting to challenge the policy by indicating his concern for the potential impact on morale, Bob asks his friend if he can think of any effective way to approach the manager.

Third, members of the coaster class participate moderately in formal and informal communication; perhaps this is due to their belief that opportunity to participate is rarely present. This belief could be based on reality or simply be a perception. In either case the employee's limited motivation is never challenged toward action by participative opportunity in the organization. In the first illustration, the employee's perception is accurate. Julie helps her coworker understand the new regulations but doesn't take the time to share her concerns about their impact on production in her area. She knows her supervisor isn't open to suggestion, so she doesn't see any reason to bother offering an opinion. She

chooses to focus on her task and not get involved. In a second example, the employee's perception of limited opportunity moderates his motivation to participate. John has just left a meeting in which 5 managers were trying to make a decision on the next product the company would manufacture and market. John tells his coworker that he is usually pretty quiet in these meetings because it doesn't matter what the committee suggests, the head of production has already made the choice.

There is no indication that members of this class actually lobby for greater participative opportunity as suggested by the similarity with the lobbyer participation class in the original model. However, due to the fact that no lobbying behaviors were examined in this study, data do not suggest otherwise, simply that it is uncertain. This research proposes that Coasters simply relax into limited participation.

Fourth, potential engagers may actually lobby for change in their opportunity. Their high levels of self-efficacy would suggest that they persevere in the face of limited opportunity (Bandura, 1977). At a minimum, they would remain open and take advantage of the opportunities that exist. Either way, the limited sense of opportunity may be influencing their levels of commitment to their organizations. For example, Felicia has been with the company for three years. She has expressed some interest in chairing a committee to address low worker morale. Each time she has tried to talk to her manager about the issue,

Felicia is met with denial of the problem and a firm verbal push back to her "job." Whenever she finds opportunity, she attempts to take advantage of it, however, the majority of the time she feels willing to participate, yet unable.

Finally, members of the group of avoiders have a low sense of competence and choose not to participate even when opportunity is present. Consider Thomas' choices in his team's weekly meetings. When he can, Thomas finds a reason to be absent from the meeting. When this strategy fails, he limits his participation in several ways. Often, he simply remains silent for much of the meeting. Sometimes when asked for his opinion, he moves the conversation turn by indicating his interest in what "Todd" (i.e., another member) has to say on the subject. If he is pressed and feels he must respond, he makes safe contributions. Low levels of self-efficacy suggest avoiders, like Thomas, may make generic contributions, thus limiting meaningful participation.

It is unclear whether the choice to avoid would impact any of the other classes in an avoider's workgroup. It is possible that avoidance behaviors slow the momentum of participation by others. Additionally, an avoider subgroup may exist whose members behave in pessimistic ways that poison the participation climate.

The second key finding connects employee attitudes and perceptions to communication behaviors. Variables that construe membership in participation class are differentially valuable in predicting participation behaviors. In

combination, these variables define general approaches to participative opportunity, yet individually, they predict specific dimensions of communication behavior. First, self-efficacy has the greatest influence on participation in formal communication and non-participation communication behaviors. Perhaps the formal, more structured context is perceived to have higher risk, and therefore, high feelings of general efficacy are important to the choice to participate. This risk could relate to the presence of management and the impact of participation choice on rewards (e.g., a positive review, increased esteem in the eyes of coworkers, consideration for promotion). However, efficacy regarding one's own ability to communicate effectively will determine avoidance and withdrawal behavior. Second, all four dimensions are significantly influenced by employee motivation. The two classes with the highest levels of motivation, engager and potential engager, are the same two groups of employees with the highest frequency of participation in formal communication. Finally, the only impact for sense of opportunity is on formal communication. This appears unusual at first glance given the significance of sense of opportunity to the delineation of participation class. However, this finding may be explained by the way that opportunity was operationalized. The measure for sense of opportunity implied only formal opportunities. Therefore, it is unclear from these data how accessible coworkers were or how easy they were to talk with about work.

Finally, employees who perceive low levels of opportunity to participate in their organizations have lower levels of commitment and are less satisfied with the participative environment than other employees. We know that organizational variables that influence culture and climate impact employee attitudes about the organization. In addition, employee perceptions also influence employees' choices to participate and overall sense of morale. Analyses indicate that sense of opportunity was the strongest predictor of the model that determined membership in participation class. The coaster class was the only cluster with an extreme low sense of opportunity and members in this participation class indicated low levels of commitment and satisfaction. In fact, it accounted for the greatest variance in the commitment and satisfaction models. These results support Shadur et al.'s (1999) finding that employees' perceptions of involvement were strongly related to their organizational commitment.

Implications for Theory

This study makes several contributions to the literature on participation by providing an initial description of employee types who differ in relation to participative opportunity. This exploration responds to multiple research needs presented in existing work on participation. Recently, Seibold and Shea (2001) called for taxonomic work to delineate various forms of participation in group-structured programs. However, the value of typologies in other areas of participation is also evident in the literature. For example, Forester's (2000) call

for selective empowerment creates the need for categorization of unique participation types. Practitioners can only empower employees as individuals with differing motivations and skills when those differences are understand. Therefore, taxonomic work is needed to build a foundation for theory development. This study begins the process of classification, laying the groundwork for precise conceptual and operational distinctions among types of employees relative to their participation in the communication activity of organizations.

Therefore, the first contribution is to suggest a theoretical direction that explains differences among employees' general stances toward participative opportunity. This can help unravel the mystery of why employees in the same context choose to participate differentially. For example, it can help explain why some feedback/appraisal systems may not work well in organizations by indicating how members of different participation classes may respond. Even in programs where participation is to some degree mandated (e.g., 360- degree feedback initiatives), workers have control over the amount and quality of their participation. Therefore, it is important to understand what elements may influence their choices.

Second, exploring motivation, sense of opportunity, and self-efficacy as the component variables of participation class extends current research in important ways. Chiles and Zorn (1995) examined self-efficacy and employees' perceptions of culture in a study of empowerment and found that macro-level

culture held the strongest correlation with perceptions of empowerment and was the only variable to correlate significantly with both dimensions: competence and authority. Similarly, the current study found that employee perceptions of opportunity delineated class membership. In addition, it extends their work by (a) incorporating individual motivation (as called for by Cheney et al., 1998, and Coffey & Langford, 1998), and (b) operationalizing self-efficacy not only as a general sense of personal ability but also as ability specific to communication behaviors. First, the addition of motivation extends the empowerment model by accounting for the influence of desire. This moves participation beyond Chiles and Zorn's two-dimensional model to include individual employee choice. Second, the dual measure of self-efficacy expands our understanding by indicating how perceived communication competence can influence the choice to participate.

This contribution also points out that if participative systems are to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and ability of employees at all levels, we need to acknowledge that personal feelings of self-efficacy are not enough to foster active participation. Specifically, that individuals must see some opportunity within the organization to participate and have some motivation, internal or extrinsic, to participate. That recognition should then turn our theoretical attention to the context of organizations and the structural and cultural

features of organizations that give rise to perceptions of opportunity and motivation.

In fact, the perspective taken in this research argues for a combination of psychological and sociological approaches to explaining human behavior. The triad of elements contributing to the participation classes reflects both trait (micro) and state (macro) perspectives. Therefore, the wealth of each perspective can be applied to the study of organizational participation, enhancing the theoretical richness of future research.

Second, this work suggests that current theories assume participation to be more reactive than proactive. These data show that employees contribute more frequently in the formal context than in the informal context. Perhaps, it is that planned meetings and formal interactions with supervisors possess more variables that serve as catalysts for participation. For example, stimulus questions, incentives for participation, and specific tasks that focus involvement in formal settings may be absent or less frequent in informal and social contexts. However, understanding why formal communication is more prevalent may not be that simple.

The formal dimension is also the most complex communication dimension in relation to its predictor variables, with general self-efficacy, sense of opportunity, and motivation contributing significantly. Although findings indicate their presence, the patterns of influence are unclear. Several questions emerge.

How does sequence affect their impact on communication choices? Are there thresholds for each variable prior to another variables entry into the model? What environmental variables interact with these psychological influences on choice? Perhaps tenure, worker maturity, or relationships between coworkers involved in the participative opportunity impact the choice to communicate. This is an example of the contribution this research makes through heuristic value.

Another way to consider the proactive/reactive dimension of participation is as it informs democratic theories of participation. The democratic approach presents the most proactive view of participation, suggesting that employees exhibit citizenship behaviors that influence their organizations. Although a democratically structured organization has formal processes in place for participation, the informal communication context is also important for participation to flourish. Political democratic theory suggests that grass roots efforts are critical to the formation and proposal of ideas that influence social structures (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996). The indication in the data that informal and social participation occur less frequently than formal communication helps explain why democratic structures are difficult to maintain. Cheney (1995) characterizes democracy in the workplace as a system that is self-critical, self-regulating, and self-correcting. However, this requires participation. If informal participative communication is not normative in organizations, then communication patterns are limiting the democratic process.

Finally, this research provides a response to the call to explore how participation is manifest discursively (Seibold & Shea, 2001). While much of the participation research has provided static analysis of outputs, this study offers an exploration of participation types that contributes to our understanding of participation as it unfolds day to day through the process of communication. This study takes the first step by categorizing communication behaviors involved in participation. The determination of four communication dimensions of participation tapped discursive behaviors that both engage and evade participative opportunity. The dimensions emphasize context as a discriminating factor and are predicted by different individual variables. Further development of scales for each of these dimensions can provide an important tool for distinguishing participative choice. For example, future researchers could explore employees' participative communication in relation to their position in the overall communication network, further defining the discursive, socially constructed nature of the organization.

A potential contribution of this study to the development of theory is almost lost due to the embedded nature of communication in the definition of participation applied. Respondents' scores indicate that they participate in their organizations in communicative ways. Low scores may have suggested that communication is not at the center of participation in organizations. However, this research provides clear evidence that participation is communicative.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, generalizability may be limited due to the high presence of a certain type of worker in the sample (viz., white collar, computer literate workers). The sampling technique utilized college students to collect potential respondents, which may have limited the sample pool. General demographic variables of age and gender were diverse. However, if the sample had more workers from the manufacturing sector, specifically, factory workers or included employees from retail (e.g., WalMart employees), the data may have rendered a broader or perhaps different class typology. Given the level of abstraction of the typology, it is unlikely that these general approaches to participative opportunity would be absent in a different sample. However, the membership percentages may differ and other classes may emerge.

It is important to note that the sample has several strengths. First, the sampling method did generate a diverse set of respondents in many ways (i.e., position, organizational size, organizational type, and demographic characteristics). Accessing individuals through a network of unrelated research assistants achieved this breadth. The use of students who were taking a general education course greatly enhanced the scope of the network. Through this expansive strategy, I was able to locate five intelligible classes. Without such an approach, my results likely would have produced fewer groupings. Second, by

choosing not to approach the organizations formally, my participants were free to respond honestly. There was no opportunity for coercion, preventing organizational concerns from influencing them to respond one way or another.

Second, a concern when using a self-report technique is the potential for social desirability in the data. This may have influenced the data on communication self-efficacy. Participants responded to a 1-7 scale and the range for the variable was 3.38 – 7. Extreme low values of communication self-efficacy were not reported from these respondents. That may indicate an unwillingness of some to report such self-perceptions due to social desirability. However, the manner in which the data were collected and the complete lack of contact the researcher had with respondents suggests that respondents had little incentive to disguise their own genuine estimates of this self-perception. Therefore, it is more likely that the range is related to sample make-up and an issue of generalizability.

A third limitation of this study is that the list of communication behaviors may have been incomplete. For example, one of the communication dimensions (e.g., non-participation behaviors) may have yielded different results if it had been comprised of more items. The items addressed withdrawal and avoidance behaviors but did not suggest blocking behaviors, non-participation that may hinder overall levels of participation in the organization. Considering the low frequency of the non-participation dimension for all participation classes (engager to avoider) it is possible that other communication behaviors could help delineate

more manifestations of non-participation. The possibly incomplete nature of the measure used here creates some concern for the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Future Directions

Several directions for future research stem from the need to clarify the delineation of participation classes and then characterize them through rich description. First, increasing the diversity in the sample may distinguish more participation classes with greater clarity. One way to create a sample with greater depth in a variety of participative opportunity contexts is to conduct research in multiple organizations that have been selected based on this difference. Seibold and Shea (2001) suggested that one way to operationalize this is to select organizations representing each of Walton and Hackman's (1986) three organization types: control-strategy organizations, commitment-strategy organizations, and mixed-strategy organizations. In addition to increasing the potential for more participation classes to emerge, this research could explore the influence of organizational variables through the comparison of the samples from each organization. Specifically, individual and group participation could be related to the culture of each organization and then compared to the other organizations.

Second, to further explore how participation is manifest discursively, participative communication behaviors should be studied using multiple methodologies. First, a qualitative approach can provide rich detail with nuance

that would be missed in a survey format. Gordon's (1988) communication behaviors, ranging from active constructive to passive destructive would be a beneficial typology for coding. Descriptive data can also suggest content areas to address in an expansion of the participative communication measure. The second approach would follow a survey design. One useful goal for this type of research would be to classify the types of content present in participation communication. A second goal would be to improve the scales for the four dimensions of communication found in this study. Participation research could benefit from this line of research in many ways. Direct application for this researcher would be to utilize results to enhance the characterization of participation classes.

A third valuable approach would explore participation classes within their communication networks. For example, determining whether location within the network is related to class membership may help explain how discursive practices develop, maintain, or constrain varied approaches to participative opportunity. It would be important to address both frequency and content of the communication.

Another direction for future research suggested by this study emerges from the findings for predictors of communication behavior. First, as a significant predictor of all four dimensions of communication behavior, motivation requires greater attention. It would be interesting to discover what the motivation to participate is as expressed in qualitative data. Do employees want to look good in front of the boss? Do they want to make friends? Do they want to avoid getting in

trouble? Do they want to satisfy their egos? Do they see participation as a part of their jobs and want to fulfill their roles? Similarly, it would be useful to understand what antecedents lead to motivation to participate and how they vary across the participation classes. For example, using the intrinsic/extrinsic delineation could explain why some employees are motivated to participate in certain organizational contexts while others are not. More specifically, applying the four cognitive dimensions of empowerment (i.e., meaningfulness, competence, impact, and choice) could suggest which dimensions influence each class's choice to participate.

A second variable needing more exploration is self-efficacy. Results from this study indicate that as general self-efficacy increases, employees engage in more formal participative communication and as communication self-efficacy increases, non-participative communication behaviors decrease. In both models where self-efficacy was present, it was the strongest predictor. It would be useful to know what communicative behaviors on the part of supervisors and coworkers influence employees' levels of self-efficacy. Additionally, a training and development study could explore the effectiveness of communication skills training on perceived competence to participate. Research in this area would require longitudinal analyses due to the generally stable nature of self-perception variables.

Other possible areas of exploration would address the following questions. Can the 5 participation classes work together in satisfying ways? This includes satisfaction for the employees and satisfaction with the employees. Another area of interest is the avoider class. Although avoiders made up only 4% of this sample, their presence may influence organizational process in powerful ways. Therefore, further discovery is important. Multiple questions emerge. Why do avoiders choose not to participate? What are the unique ways of being an avoider? Where do avoiders belong in the organization? Where are they most effective, most satisfied?

Implications for Practitioners

Implications emerge from this study that direct practitioners concerned with multiple types of participation in organizations. The first three implications apply to participation as empowerment. The final implication addresses comprehensive changes in organizational structure that support democratic processes.

Empowerment. The primary implication for practitioners suggests three locations for intervention when attempting to influence levels of participation in the organization. First, employees' motivation to participate influenced their enactment of all four participation communication dimensions. Therefore, organizations that make changes in business practices and work processes that

serve as antecedents to employee motivation will alter participation in their organizations.

Second, sense of opportunity creates the greatest distinction between employees on their general approach to participative opportunity. Specifically, it has influence on employees' choice to engage in formal participation communication. The formal context would include meetings and involvement in structured participation programs. As this context is likely the primary focus for management of participation in the organization, sense of opportunity is a critical area for attention. It is useful to note that other research suggests that it is as important to influence the perception of opportunity, as it is to actually change the opportunity.

Third, this study indicates general self-efficacy as the strongest predictor of formal participative communication and low levels of communication self-efficacy as the strongest predictor of non-participative communication behaviors. The literature suggests that cognitive issues such as access to information can influence attitudinal forces through enhanced empowerment and self-efficacy (Seibold & Shea, 2001). Therefore, organizations that provide access to information and communication training may positively influence employees' participation choice and quality. However, to influence self-efficacy, training must be followed with opportunities for skills practice and celebration of success.

A second implication relevant to increasing employees' perceptions of participative opportunity is suggested by the importance of these perceptions to employee morale. The data indicate that where sense of opportunity was low, respondents were less satisfied with the opportunity and had low levels of commitment to the organization (see Shadur et al., 1999 for related findings). These morale issues may contribute to the lower levels of participation exhibited by employees who perceive limited opportunity.

Finally, the delineation of varied participation classes enables differential management. Many critical communication scholars have repeated Cheney's (1995) early call for research that can lead to a more "humane workplace" (p. 169). This study moves us toward that goal by suggesting a theoretical direction that enables consideration of varied employee perspectives on participation when making managerial choices. Findings of this study provide a tool for practitioners that can classify employees on their general approaches to participation. This can increase managers' ability to more effectively utilize the human resources of their organizations. This process includes treating employees as individuals and enabling them to contribute to their potential.

Additionally, several implications for workers should result from differential management. First, stress related to a mismatch between employees' self-efficacy and expected levels of participation can be reduced. This is true for the employee who does not feel capable and perceives an expectation to

participate beyond the job description as well as the employee who is highly self-efficacious and feels constrained from participating. Second, managing with employees' motivation in mind can lead to greater feelings of satisfaction for all employees and increased opportunity for self-actualization among employees with high levels of motivation to participate.

Workplace Democracy. The distinction of varied participation classes suggests employees hold differing values that influence the extent of their involvement in their organizations. These differences interact with the participative climate in the organization. This interaction implies several suggestions for implementation of a democratic structure. The current ideology of speed suggests that "Whatever you do, do it quickly." However, an encompassing move toward democratization in an organization would require commitment at the top. First, management must be willing to decentralize power. This is endemic to the nature of democratic participation. Second, they must be willing to lose a portion of the organization's members. Highly participative organizational arrangements require that members hold similar values regarding involvement in the process of organizing (i.e., activities that go beyond production/task performance). Therefore, some members who are uncomfortable with the change will leave the organization. This suggests the third point, which is a willingness to weight values similarity as a strong component in the hiring process. Shared

values relevant to participation are necessary for organizational members to operate effectively in a democratic structure.

Conclusion

In a discussion of values in the workplace, Cheney (1999) asks what options are available for escaping the constraints of "commodified employee involvement" (p. 157). This study responds by proposing differential treatment of employees regarding their participation in the process of organizing. Whether looking at cognitive, affective, or contingency models of participation, the participative act is primarily voluntary. Although there are participative behaviors that can be required of an employee, the quantity and quality of that involvement is at the employee's discretion. Even beyond employees' control over their participative responses, they control informal participation (i.e., the choice to participate when no stimuli are mandating contribution). Understanding that the quality, purpose, and to some degree presence of participation is in the hands of individual employees, we can say that participation is consensual. Therefore, greater understanding of participation as perceived and experienced by the employee is critical to the development of more comprehensive theories of participation as well as the practical application of existing theory.

This study demonstrated the presence of unique approaches to participative opportunity in the workplace. Overall, the study suggests an approach to participation theory that utilizes workers' perceptions and considers

their well-being. Findings and implications from this research suggest important directions for future work in the area of participation. One valuable area to explore is that of change in organizations. An assumption underlying this research is the continual need for change to maintain health in the organization. This change can range from implementation of new ideas in a small work group to an organization-wide initiative. If the approach presented here serves as a catalyst for research that helps us understand more about the ways change can be facilitated by employee participation that effectively serves the individual and the organization, this work will make an important contribution.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1

What is Participation?

Source	Description
Participation:	
Rock, 1991, p. 43	any arrangement in which workers are given a voice in the decision-making in a company
Cole et al., 1993, p. 68	employee involvement in decision making that is relatively formal, direct, relatively local and moderately open regarding decision-making access
Stohl, 1995, p. 5	discretionary interactions of individuals or groups resulting in cooperative linkage which exceed minimal coordination needs
Coffey & Langford, 1998, p. 544	decision making that is not subject to the review or approval of the authority of any other individual or group
Kaler, 1999, p. 125	a situation in which employees have some sort of share in the businesses, which employ them
Employee involvement:	
Cotton, 1993, p. 14	a participative process to use the entire capacity of workers, designed to encourage employee commitment to organizational success
Shadur et al., 1999, p. 479	composed of the three variables of participation in decision making, teamwork, and communications
Workplace democracy:	
Cheney, 1995, pp. 170 & 171	a system of governance which truly values individual goals and feelings…as well as typically organizational objectives…which actively fosters the connection between those two sets of concerns by encouraging individual contributions to important organizational choices, which allows for the ongoing modification of the organization's activities and policies by the group
Cheney et al., 1998, p. 39	principles and practices designed to engage and "represent"…as many relevant individuals and groups as possible in the formulation, execution, and modification of work-related activities

Empowerment:

Albrecht, 1988, p. 380	an interactional process, where a sense of personal control results from believing it is one's communication behavior that can produce a desired impact on others
Chiles & Zorn, 1995, p. 2	employees perceive both a personal sense of competence and the authority or control to act
Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998, p. 319	process through which an individual perceives that s/he controls his or her situation
Corsun & Enz, 1999	a motivational process of an individual's experience of feeling enabled – based on three dimensions: personal influence, self-efficacy, and meaningfulness
Forrester, 2000, p. 67	involvement that implies the freedom and the ability to make decisions and commitments, not just to suggest them or be part of making them

Appendix B

Electronic Cover Letter

This is addressed to the researcher's e-mail address so that all participants' e-mail addresses can remain confidential.

Communicating Your Participation at Work

You are invited to take part in a study of how people participate in their organizations through 'talk about work.' This study is my dissertation project. I am a Ph.D. student at The University of Texas at Austin and an Assistant Professor at The University of Arkansas at Little Rock. You are being asked to participate as someone who is employed full-time by an organization and are not considered self-employed. In addition, you should be in a position at or below middle management. If you participate, you will be 1 of approximately 150 people in the study.

You will be asked questions about how you "participate" in your organization. I am interested in learning more about the way you communicate at work for more than routine matters (e.g., confirming an appointment or telling a coworker that you've completed a task). I'm interested in communication that creates an impact on the way work is accomplished, the quality of an organization's product or service, the creation of organizational policy, the development of future directions for the organization, and similar other types of organizational issues.

Participation in this project is voluntary and your responses will be anonymous. Your name will never be connected with your answers. In addition, your choice regarding participation will have no affect on your relationship with your place of employment or the universities connected with this project (The University of Texas at Austin and The University of Arkansas at Little Rock). Although the information is valuable to the study, if there are individual items on the questionnaire that you would prefer to leave blank, you may do so. If you have any questions about this questionnaire or any other portion of this research project, please contact me at the e-mail address or phone number listed below (or you may call my supervisor, Dr. Laurie Lewis at 512-471-1934).

To fill out the questionnaire simply double click on the following web address, http://144.167.17.14/surveylogon.shtml, and you will be transferred directly to the questionnaire home page. If not, simply enter the web address in your Internet browser and click "go" to access the questionnaire. Then, input your e-mail address as your user ID. The process should take 10 – 15 minutes. Your response

to the questionnaire is the indication of your agreement to participate. Please keep this e-mail for your records. It is important that you respond within a week of receiving this e-mail (deadline: March 7th).

Thank you for your help.

Christine E. Cooper
Assistant Professor
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Cetrinastich@ualr.edu
Phone: 501-569-3439

Appendix C

Communicating Your Participation At Work

Cancel | Save and Submit | Save

Please respond to the following items according to each set of instructions. Remember your responses are anonymous. When you are finished, click "save and submit." If you need to stop your session, click "save" and then return to the survey at a later time to complete the process.

Note: If you use a “wheel” mouse and attempt to scroll down the page with the wheel while a question is still active, you will scroll through the options for the question and change your response. Please use the scroll bar on the right of your screen.

	Response
Section 1 Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about the organizations for which they work. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click on the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
What this organization stands for is important to me.	click here
I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	click here
If the values of this organization were different, I would not be as attached to the organization.	click here
Since joining this organization, my personal values and those of the organization have become more similar.	click here

I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	click here
The reason I prefer this organization to other organizations is because of what it stands for, that is, its values.	click here
I feel a sense of "ownership" for this organization rather than being just an employee.	click here
My attachment to this organization is primarily based on the similarity between my values and those of the organization.	click here

	Response
Section 2 Statements in this section represent ways that individuals may participate in their organizational process through communication. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates how frequently you engage in each behavior. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
I contribute ideas or suggestions in group meetings.	click here
I indicate a reason that I cannot contribute to group meetings (example: "I don't know enough about this subject to comment").	click here
I present evidence to support or question the topic of discussion in group meetings.	click here
I remain silent in group meetings.	click here
I argue my point of view in group meetings.	click here
I give my opinion in group meetings.	click here

I say as little as possible about organizational policy in formal conversations with my supervisor.	click here
In a formal meeting with my supervisor, I will make suggestions.	click here
I do one-on-one training with new employees (a mentoring/training situation helping someone learn to perform elements of my job).	click here
I share my opinions about work with my work partner.	click here
I indicate a reason that I cannot help train a new employee (example: “My workload is too heavy right now”).	click here
During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker above me on the hierarchy.	click here
Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker above me on the hierarchy.	click here
In a social setting away from work (examples: golf or a party), I talk about work with a coworker above me on the hierarchy.	click here
Informally, I interact with coworkers to discuss new ways of doing our jobs.	click here
During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker on the same level as me on the hierarchy.	click here
Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker on the same level as me on the hierarchy.	click here
In a social setting away from work	click here

(examples: golf or party), I talk about work with a coworker on the same level as me on the hierarchy.	
When a coworker starts to talk to me about organizational policy issues, I let them know that I don't want to talk about it (example: "They pay me to do my job, not set policy").	click here
During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker below me on the hierarchy.	click here
Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker below me on the hierarchy.	click here
In a social setting away from work (examples: golf or party), I talk about work with a coworker below me on the hierarchy.	click here
When a coworker begins talking to me about work-related issues, I indicate a reason not to talk about the topic (example: "A lot is going on at home and I'm too drained to focus on this").	click here
I remain silent when work-related issues are being discussed informally by a group of coworkers.	click here
I get involved in the conversation when a group of coworkers are talking about work during the work process.	click here
When a group of coworkers talk about work issues over break, I join in the conversation.	click here
In a social setting outside the work environment, I contribute to conversations about work.	click here

	Response
Section 3 It is likely that you talk with coworkers about work related issues everyday. These conversations could take place in formal settings such as meetings or in informal settings such as lunches or breaks. To respond to the following statements, consider the examples of participation through 'talk about work-related issues' listed above as well as other examples from your own organizational experience. Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about this type of participation in their organizations. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
I like to discuss work-related issues with other organizational members.	click here
I want to have input into the way my organization operates.	click here
I am motivated to talk about work related issues with others at work.	click here
I think it is important to participate in my organization.	click here
I seek opportunities to share my ideas about work related issues in my organization.	click here

	Response
Section 4 Statements in this section represent possible perceptions that individuals might have of their organization, particularly the work atmosphere. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
Elements in my working environment (people, policies, or conditions) encourage me to participate through 'talk about work issues' with others at work.	click here
When decisions are being made at work, the persons affected are asked for their ideas.	click here
New ideas suggested by employees are seriously considered for implementation.	click here
Employees have an opportunity to participate in the process of strategic planning and goal setting.	click here
Supervisors encourage involvement in problem solving activities.	click here
Management is always encouraging employees to share their ideas.	click here
Information and knowledge are shared openly in this organization.	click here
Management invites employees to share critical views.	click here
Supervisors are receptive to ideas and suggestions.	click here
Most employees trust their coworkers and bosses enough to make suggestions.	click here

	Response
Section 5 Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their ability to deal with others effectively through spoken communication. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
I can deal with others effectively.	click here
I am sensitive to others needs in conversations.	click here
During conversations I listen carefully to others and obtain as much information as I can.	click here
I have a good command of the language.	click here
I generally say the right thing at the right time.	click here
I express my ideas clearly in conversations.	click here
I am easy to talk to.	click here
I feel confident during my conversations, I am sure of what to say and do.	click here

	Response
Section 6 Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their general ability to perform effectively, that is their general expectations about success. Think of yourself at work and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
I give up on things before completing them.	click here
I avoid facing difficulties.	click here
If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.	click here
When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.	click here
I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.	click here
I feel insecure about my ability to do things.	click here
I give up easily.	click here

	Response
Section 7 Statements in this section indicate how satisfied individuals might be with their general opportunity to participate in their organizations. Please limit your focus to participation that occurs through 'talk' about work issues. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Click the down arrow to the right and a menu of options will appear.	
I am content with the number of opportunities I have to participate in this organization.	click here
I feel good about the amount of time this organization provides for its employees to participate in the process.	click here
I am satisfied with the types of opportunities I have to participate in this organization.	click here
I am happy with how much opportunity I have to participate in this organization.	click here
I can participate in my organization as much as I want to participate.	click here

Section 8
Please answer the four questions in this section by typing your responses in the boxes provided. You can enter more information than would be visible in the box at any one time.

What is "participation" to you?
Please Comment:

Do you feel that you participate in your organization? Why or why not?
Please Comment:

What is an example of a way you have communicated to participate in your organization?
Please Comment:

What is an example of a way you successfully avoided participating in your organization?
Please Comment:

	Response
Section 9 Please respond to the following items by typing information in the boxes provided and/or using the pull-down menus.	
How many years have you worked full-time for your organization?	0
In terms of the type of work you do, how would you characterize your position in your organization? *If you marked other in the pull-down menu, please specify below:*	click here
How many employees work in your local organization?	0
How would you characterize your organization? *If you marked other in the pull-down menu, please specify below:*	click here
What is your gender?	click here
What is your age?	0

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Appendix D

Table 3

Variable Descriptions

Variables	Description
Component:	
Motivation	a general desire to perform communicative acts of participation in the organization
Sense of Opportunity	the perception of organizational members that they have the opportunity to communicatively participate in their organizations
General Self-efficacy	general feelings of competence (i.e., to try new things, to face difficulties, etc.)
Communication Self-efficacy	specific feelings of communication competence (i.e., to express ideas clearly, listen carefully, be sensitive to communication partners)
Dependent:	
Organizational Commitment	a sense of shared values reflected in identification with the organization and internalization of organizational values
Satisfaction	a general positive feeling about the personal opportunity, both amount and type, to influence the organizational process
Participative Communication Dimensions:	
Formal	participative communication that takes place in formal meetings (group or one-on-one)
Informal	participative communication that takes place informally among coworkers during the process of doing work
Social	participative communication that takes place in social settings outside the work environment
Nonparticipation	informal communication among coworkers that indicates avoidance or withdrawal from participative opportunity

Appendix E

Organizational Commitment Measure

Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about the organization for which they work. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. What this organization stands for is important to me.

2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.

3. If the values of this organization were different, I would not be as attached to the organization.

4. Since joining this organization, my personal values and those of the organization have become more similar.

5. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.

6. The reason I prefer this organization to other organizations is because of what it stands for, that is, its values.

7. I feel a sense of "ownership" for this organization rather than being just an employee.

8. My attachment to this organization is primarily based on the similarity between my values and those of the organization.

Note. From "Building Organizational Commitment: A Multifirm Study," by D. F. Caldwell, J. A. Chatman, and C. A. O'Reilly, 1990, *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 63,* p. 252.

Appendix F

Satisfaction Measure

Statements in this section indicate how satisfied individuals might be with their general opportunity to participate in their organization. Please limit your focus to participation that occurs through 'talk about work-related issues. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. I am content with the number of opportunities I have to participate in this organization.

2. I feel good about the amount of time this organization provides for its employees to participate in the process.

3. I am satisfied with the types of opportunities I have to participate in this organization.

4. I am happy with how much opportunity I have to participate in this organization.

5. I can participate in my organization as much as I want to participate.

Note. Created by this researcher for this study.

Appendix G

Participative Communication Measure

Statements in this section represent ways that individuals may participate in their organizational process through communication. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates how frequently you engage in each behavior.

1. I contribute ideas or suggestions in group meetings.

2. I indicate a reason that I cannot contribute to group meetings (example: "I don't know enough about this subject to comment").

3. I present evidence to support or question the topic of discussion in group meetings.

4. I remain silent in group meetings.

5. I argue my point of view in group meetings.

6. I give my opinion in group meetings.

7. I say as little as possible about organizational policy in formal conversations with my supervisor.

8. In a formal meeting with my supervisor, I will make suggestions.

9. I do one-on-one training with new employees (a mentoring/training situation helping someone learn to perform elements of my job).

10. I share my opinions about work with my work partner.

11. I indicate a reason that I cannot help train a new employee (example: "My workload is too heavy right now").

12. During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker *above* me on the hierarchy.

13. Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker *above* me on the hierarchy.
14. In a social setting away from work (examples: golf or a party), I talk about work with a coworker *above* me on the hierarchy.

15. Informally, I interact with coworkers to discuss new ways of doing our jobs.

16. During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker on *the same level* as me on the hierarchy.

17. Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker on *the same level* as me on the hierarchy.

18. In a social setting away from work (examples: golf or party), I talk about work with a coworker on *the same level* as me on the hierarchy.

19. When a coworker starts to talk to me about organizational policy issues, I let them know that I don't want to talk about it (example: "They pay me to do my job, not set policy").

20. During the process of doing work, I talk about work with a coworker *below* me on the hierarchy.

21. Over breaks (example: lunch), I talk about work with a coworker *below* me on the hierarchy.

22. In a social setting away from work (examples: golf or party), I talk about work with a coworker *below* me on the hierarchy.

23. When a coworker begins talking to me about work-related issues, I indicate a reason not to talk about the topic (example: "A lot is going on at home and I'm too drained to focus on this").

24. I remain silent when work-related issues are being discussed informally by a group of coworkers.

25. I get involved in the conversation when a group of coworkers are talking about work during the work process.

26. When a group of coworkers talk about work issues over break, I join in the conversation.

27. In a social setting outside the work environment, I contribute to conversations about work.

Note. Created by this researcher for this study.

Appendix H

Motivation to Participate Measure

It is likely that you talk with coworkers about work related issues everyday. These conversations could take place in formal settings such as meetings or in informal settings such as lunches or breaks. To respond to the following statements, consider the examples of participation through 'talk about work-related issues' listed above as well as other examples from your own organizational experience.

Listed below are a series of statements that represent possible feelings that individuals might have about this type of participation in their organizations. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. I like to discuss work-related issues with other organizational members.

2. I want to have input into the way my organization operates.

3. I am motivated to talk about work related issues with others at work.

4. I think it is important to participate in my organization.

5. I seek opportunities to share my ideas about work related issues in my organization.

Note. Created by this researcher for this study.

Appendix I

Sense of Opportunity Measure

Statements in this section represent possible perceptions that individuals might have of their organization, particularly the work atmosphere. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. Elements in my working environment (people, policies, or conditions) encourage me to participate through 'talk about work issues' with others at work.

2. When decisions are being made at work, the persons affected are asked for their ideas.

3. New ideas suggested by employees are seriously considered for implementation.

4. Employees have an opportunity to participate in the process of strategic planning and goal setting.

5. Supervisors encourage involvement in problem solving activities.

6. Management is always encouraging employees to share ideas.

7. Information and knowledge are shared openly in this organization.

8. Management invites employees to share critical views.

9. Supervisors are receptive to ideas and suggestions.

10. Most employees trust their coworkers and bosses enough to make suggestions.

Note. Some items adapted from *"Survey of Organizations: A Machine-scored Standardized Questionnaire Instrument,"* by J. C. Taylor, and D. G. Bowers, 1972, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press and "*Reinventing Texas Government*," by M. L. Lauderdale, 1999, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Appendix J

Generalized Self-efficacy Measure

Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their general ability to perform effectively, that is their general expectations about success. Think of yourself at work and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. I give up on things before completing them.
2. I avoid facing difficulties.
3. If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.
4. When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.
5. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.
6. I feel insecure about my ability to do things.
7. I give up easily.

Note: From "The Self-efficacy Scale: Construction and Validation," by M. Sherer et al., 1982. *Psychological Reports, 51,* 663-671.

Appendix K

Communication Self-efficacy Measure

Statements in this section represent possible feelings that individuals might have about their ability to deal with others effectively through spoken communication. Think of your organization and pick the answer that indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

completely disagree 1 ---------- 7 completely agree

1. I can deal with others effectively.

2. I am sensitive to others needs in conversations.

3. During conversations I listen carefully to others and obtain as much information as I can.

4. I have a good command of the language.

5. I generally say the right thing at the right time.

6. I express my ideas clearly in conversations.

7. I am easy to talk to.

8. I feel confident during my conversations, I am sure of what to say and do.

Note. Adapted from "Communicator Competence in the Workplace: Model Testing and Scale Development," by P. R. Monge, S. G. Backman, J. P. Dillard, and E. M. Eisenberg, 1982, *Communication Yearbook, 5,* pp. 505-528 and "Interaction Involvement: A Cognitive Dimension of Communicative Competence," by D. J. Cegala, 1981, *Communication Education, 30,* pp. 109-121.

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Vita

Christine Evelyn Cooper was born in Memphis, Tennessee, July 29, 1959. She is the middle child of three siblings. Her parents are J. William Bowles and Janet Bowles of Nesbit, Mississippi.

After graduating from Memphis Preparatory High School, she moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma and received her B.A. in Communication with an emphasis in Drama from Oral Roberts University in May of 1981. In August of that year Christie began studying Theatre at The University of Memphis and was granted an M.F.A. in directing in May of 1984.

Christie worked in the Arts for several years, supporting theatre production and creative education initiatives in multiple communities in Arkansas and Texas. Her interest in the West led her to Colorado where she worked in Marketing and met and married Tom Cooper. Moving even further west, her professional endeavors continued to utilize her communication skills in an administrative supervisory position supporting a national sales force.

Having taught night classes for a number of years, Christie's teaching goals led her to The University of Memphis where she began studying organizational communication. An M.A. in Speech Communication was conferred in May of 1997. She chose to continue and was admitted to the doctoral program in Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin in August of that year. After completing coursework and a comprehensive examination, Christie accepted a position with The University of Arkansas at Little Rock as an Assistant Professor. She currently teaches graduate and undergraduate coursework and directs the University's technology based group decision center.

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